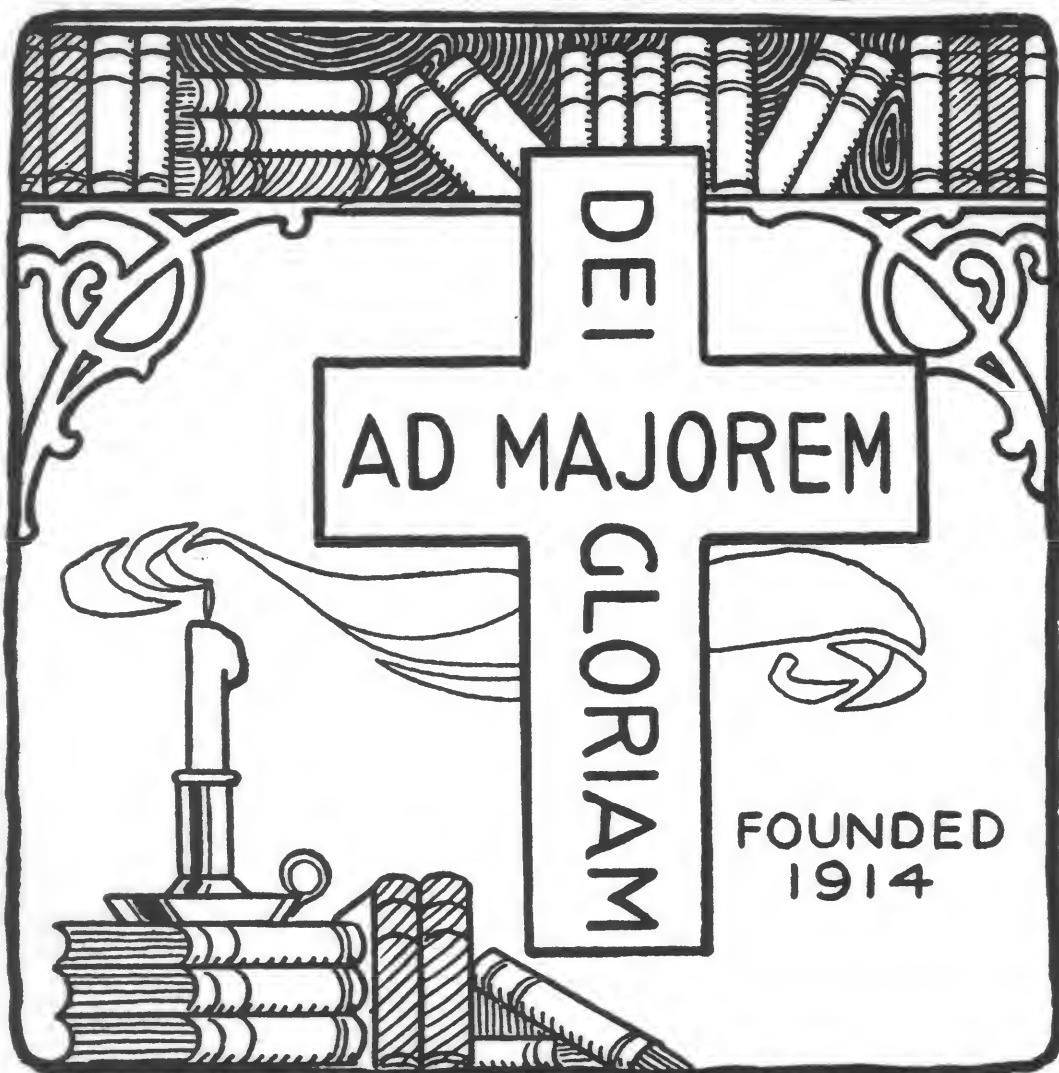




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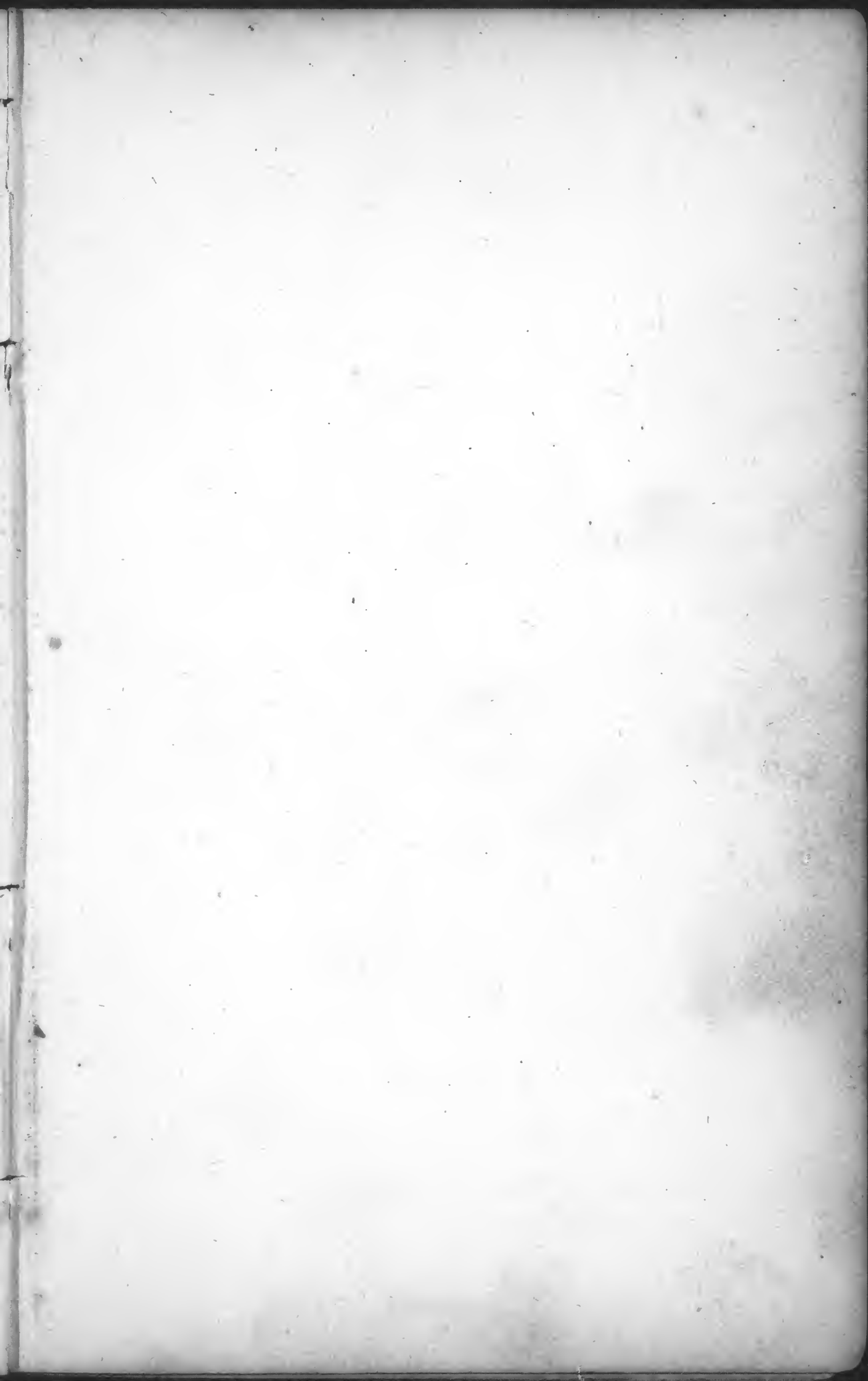
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THE STORY OF OUR FOUNDER.

ELLIOT STOCK, LONDON.





John Wesley.

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THE STORY
OF
OUR FOUNDER:

BEING A
LIFE OF JOHN WESLEY,
WRITTEN FOR CHILDREN.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY THE
REV. THOMAS VASEY.

Second Edition.

LONDON :
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
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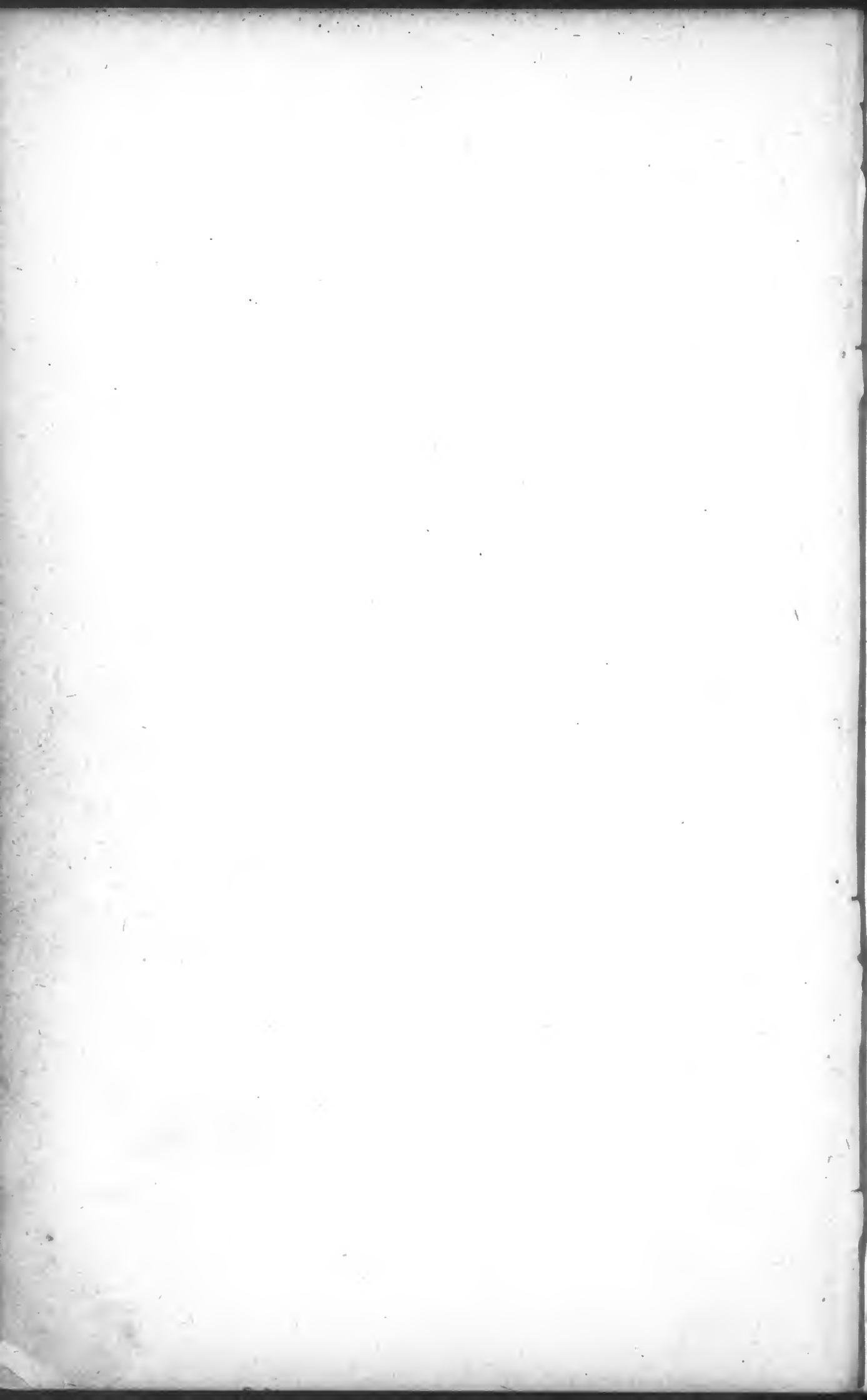
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INTRODUCTION.

THE Methodists have scarcely yet realised to the full extent of its value the precious heritage bequeathed to them in the character and life of their founder. And it may well be doubted, whether, in all the biographical efforts which have been put forth, we have yet done justice to his memory. At any rate, the present little publication may claim to occupy a department which has been left entirely vacant and deserves to be filled up. It is an attempt to introduce John Wesley to our young people, with a view to assist them in forming their character and shaping their course after his model. Nothing

could be more happily conceived. What is wanted everywhere in religious society is men of John Wesley's stamp—men of deep convictions—men of action—men superior to conventionalities and prejudices—men of transparent simplicity and directness—men capable of leading great spiritual movements suited to the necessities of the times.

If such men are to be found amongst us, they must be trained and moulded from childhood; must begin early, and work hard before they will come out into publicity, and take their part in the work of the Church.

Hence the desirableness of such a work as this to put before young and ardent minds the proper model to work to. Many similar efforts have been made to invite the ambition of young minds to tread in the steps of men eminent in science, in mechanical genius, in

general literature, in foreign travels, and geographical discoveries.

It is high time that our young people should be stimulated to emulate the best examples of true moral heroism and energy, since here undoubtedly lies a field open to the competition of all. Let them be taught that it is as glorious a task to save a soul as to make a steam-engine; to explain the way of salvation clearly to perishing men, as to make the most valuable discoveries in physical science; and that to contribute to the elevation of the lowest classes of society to purity, and dignity, and moral excellence, is the highest service that any man can render to his country and his race.

The character of John Wesley is well adapted to catch this noble emulation in youthful minds. Its development is sufficiently marked

in childhood and youth to attract the sympathies of young people. And the way in which the salient points are selected and handled in this little book, is calculated to answer fully the end proposed by the writer.

THOMAS VASEY.

ORCHARD COTTAGE, SUNDERLAND.

CHAPTER I.

WESLEY'S PARENTS.

EPWORTH is a small town situated in the flat fenny county of Lincolnshire. There is nothing striking in the appearance of the place or its houses, and nothing particularly beautiful in the surrounding country : and yet there is an attraction in the town of Epworth, not possessed by many larger or more lovely localities ; for here, about a hundred and eighty years ago, there lived one of the most loving families in England, two members of which were destined, in the providence of God, to be instruments for the revival of religion wherever the English language is spoken, and whose names will be held in loving reverence long after we who speak of them have past away and are forgotten.

Epworth was a long, narrow, straggling town, the houses were old and mean-looking, and it was in the old parsonage-house that this family lived. It was what many, looking at the outside, would call a poor, mean home ; but for all that it was one among the very happiest homes in the land ; so little influence has outside appearance over real happiness. This

parsonage-house was built of rough timber and plaster; it had casement windows and a thatched roof; it faced the High-street of Epworth, of which place the Rev. Samuel Wesley was the rector.

I have said that it was outwardly a poor home; and, as far as this world's wealth is concerned, there was poverty inside as well; but it was rich in love and unity. Mr. Wesley's income was very small, and his family was numerous—at one time there were thirteen children living at home together; and where there are so many, especially if there be poverty as well, brothers and sisters are apt to fall out. But the Wesley children were noted for their brotherly love: the little garden rung with their childish voices in happy, loving play; and in the scantily-furnished, old-fashioned rooms, lessons were learnt and repeated without crying, quarrelling, or wrangles (even the baby, they used to say, "cried softly")—a proof that *circumstances* are no excuse for the rudeness and the ill-nature that so frequently mar the intercourse of brothers and sisters.

There is no doubt that the happy, united feeling which pervaded the Wesley family, was to be attributed to the careful oversight and religious training which the boys and girls received from their father and mother. Mr. Wesley, though a most kind parent, loved his children far too well and too wisely to be indulgent to their faults; he knew that, amiable and

clever as they were, they had sinful natures which could only be changed by the working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts: and he prayed with and for them; correcting them when he deemed it needful, and teaching them ever to make, not his will simply, but the will of God, as revealed in the Bible, the guide of their conduct. A few particulars of his life will be interesting.

The Rev. Samuel Wesley was born about the year 1662. This year was remarkable as that in which two thousand clergymen were ejected from their livings on St. Bartholomew's day (August 24th) sooner than conform, against their consciences, to a "New Act of Conformity," passed by Charles II. Many were the pitiful scenes enacted in the parsonages on this day. Men, women, and little children were driven from their homes and exposed to cruel persecutions; among those who suffered was the grandfather of Samuel Wesley, who was ejected from his living and compelled to give up preaching.

It is said that when Samuel Wesley went up to study at Oxford, about the year 1681, he had only two pounds sixteen shillings in his pocket. How was this? When young, he had the misfortune to lose his father, and his mother being poor, he was placed by other relatives at an academy where the religious teaching was wholly opposed to his own views. Here, in deference to their wishes, he re-

mained till he considered himself old enough to support himself. He then left the academy, and his friends altogether refused to help him. Samuel Wesley, however, felt that he need be a burden to no one. He walked to Oxford, entered himself at Exeter College as a "poor scholar," and began his studies there with no larger a sum than that just mentioned. From that time, until he took his degree, he only received five shillings from his friends. He composed exercises for those who had more money than learning; he gave instruction to any who would pay him for his labour; and thus, by great industry and frugality, he not only maintained himself for some years at college, but saved the sum of ten pounds, fifteen shillings, by the time that he needed to go to London to be ordained. He, after his marriage, wrote much for the booksellers. He cordially approved of the Revolution in 1688, which secured to England a Protestant sovereign. It is said that he was the first to write in its defence, and dedicated his book to Queen Mary, who was so pleased with it that she gave him the living of Epworth in 1693, which he held for forty years.

There is a characteristic story told of him while he was residing in London. He once happened to go into a coffee-house to obtain some refreshment; in a box at the other end of the room were several gentlemen, one of whom, an officer in the Guards, swore

dreadfully. Mr. Wesley saw that it would be difficult for him to address the officer in such a way as to command his attention ; at the same time he could not bear the sin against God's holy name to pass unbuked. He therefore desired the waiter to bring him a glass of water, and when it was brought he said aloud, " Carry it to that gentlemen in the red coat, and request him to wash his mouth after his oaths." The officer sprang up in a fury, and would have rushed on Mr. Wesley, but his companions held him back, one of them saying, " Nay, colonel, you gave the first offence. You see the gentleman is a clergyman ; you know it is an affront to swear in his presence." So they drew the officer away, and Mr. Wesley departed peacefully, doubtless wishing he could have convinced those gentlemen that his reproof had been directed, not to the sin against his profession, but to the *sin against God*.

Some years after, being again in London, he was walking in St. James's Park. While there, a gentleman accosted him in a friendly manner, and walked beside him. Presently, the stranger asked Mr. Wesley if he had ever seen him before. Mr. Wesley answered, " No." The gentleman then recalled to his memory the scene in the coffee-house, and added, " Since that time, Sir, I thank God, I have feared an oath, and everything that is offensive to the Divine Majesty ; and, as I have a perfect recollection of you,

I rejoiced at seeing you, and could not refrain from expressing my gratitude to God and to you."

"A word spoken in season, how good it is!"

This anecdote will partly enable you to understand what manner of man the father of the young Wesleys was. Hard-working, clever, bold, and God-fearing, you can imagine the kind of authority he exercised in his family.

It will also interest many readers of *Robinson Crusoe* to know that Mr. Wesley and Defoe were schoolfellows and friends.

But it was Mrs. Wesley who exerted the greatest influence over her sons, especially over the one whose life was afterwards so noteworthy. She was the youngest daughter of the Rev. Samuel Annesley, a nonconforming clergyman of London, a man of devout piety and intense love for the Bible, of which he read always twenty chapters a day. Mrs. Wesley was the sole teacher of her children while they were young. She not only taught them to read and write, but gave them instruction in French, Latin, and Greek; while, under her directions, the little girls became well skilled in sewing and knitting. Valuable as was all this instruction, it was the least part of what she did for her children. In the evening, when her day's work was done (and in so poor a household and with so large a family that work must have been most heavy), the tired mother laboured for her chil-

dren's highest good. I will give you her own words, and you can picture for yourselves the gentle loving mother, holding private intercourse with one or other of her family. "I take such a proportion of time as I can best spare every night to discourse with each child by itself, on something that relates to its principal concerns. On Monday, I talk with Molly; on Tuesday, with Hetty; Wednesday, with Nancy; Thursday, with Jacky; Friday, with Patty; Saturday, with Charles; and with Emily and Sukey together on Sunday."

Precious was the seed thus sown, which was watered by the mother's constant prayers; and blessed were the results granted by the Holy Spirit. When we are made better by thinking of John Wesley's heroic life, or our souls are thrilled and elevated by Charles Wesley's hymns, let us gratefully remember those Thursday and Saturday "talks," and give honour to the mother who thus laboured with and for her children.

Many years afterwards, Mrs. Wesley wrote out her opinions about the bringing up of children, and quoted the rules which had been enforced in Epworth Parsonage. I should like all my young readers to study them attentively, for their result was one of the happiest, most loving, and most cheerful families in England.

"In order," writes Mrs. Wesley, "to form the

minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their will, and to bring them to an obedient temper. To inform the understanding is a work of time, and must, with children, proceed by slow degrees, as they are able to bear it; but the subjecting the will is a thing which must be done at once, and the sooner the better; for, by neglecting timely correction, they will contract a stubbornness and obstinacy which are hardly ever afterward conquered, and never without using such severity as would be as painful to me as to the child. In the esteem of the world they pass for kind and indulgent, whom I call cruel parents—who permit their children to get habits which they know must be afterwards broken. . . .

“Our children were taught, as soon as they could speak, the Lord’s Prayer, which they were made to say at rising and bed-time constantly; to which, as they grew bigger, was added a short prayer for their parents. . . . They were very early made to distinguish the Sabbath from other days before they could well speak or go. . . .

“They were quickly made to understand that they might have nothing that they cried for, and instructed to speak properly for what they wanted. They were not suffered to ask even the lowest servant for aught, without saying, pray (or, if you please), give me such a thing.

“Taking God’s name in vain, cursing and swearing,

profaneness, rude, ill-bred names, were never heard among them.

“It has often been observed that cowardice and fear of punishment often lead children into lying, till they get a custom of it, which they cannot leave. To prevent this, a law was made that whosoever was charged with a fault of which they were guilty, if they would ingenuously confess it, and promise to amend, they should not be beaten.

“That no sinful action, as lying, disobedience, quarrelling, &c., should ever pass unpunished.

“That no child should ever be twice chid, or beaten, for the same fault; and that, if they amended, they should never be upbraided with it afterwards.

“That every signal act of obedience, especially when it crossed their own inclinations, should be always commended, and frequently rewarded, according to the merits of the case.

“That if ever any child performed an act of obedience, or did any thing with an intention to please, though the performance was not well, yet the obedience and intention should be kindly accepted, and the child, with sweetness, directed how to do better for the future.

“That property be inviolably preserved; and none suffered to invade the property of another in the smallest matter, though it were but the value of a farthing or a pin—which they might not take

from the owner without, much less against, his consent.

“That promises be strictly observed.”

I fear some of the above quotations will be found a little dull by many of my young readers, but I trust a few may glean some useful lessons from them ; while some older people, who now and again take up a child's book to pass away a leisure moment, may be glad to receive a hint from the wise family rules laid down by “the mother of the Wesleys.”

CHAPTER II.

CONTENT AND POVERTY.

I HAVE said that the Wesley family was poor, and you may ask how that was. Mr. Wesley was poor when the rectory of Epworth was given him in 1693, and when we remember how large a family he had—nineteen children in all—that fact alone would account for his remaining a poor man all his days. Possibly, had he been richer, the people of Epworth would have thought more of their minister; for as you will know, when you mix more in the world, the people of this world esteem others rather for their wealth and position, than for their goodness. It is only those who see things in the light of eternity who judge of and care for a man for what he *is*,—not for what he *has*. And for that very reason the friendship of worldly people is of little worth, seeing it is for the most part based on that which a man may most easily lose—his worldly possessions.

You must understand, therefore, that though there was much love in the little parsonage at Epworth, there were ill feelings in the town itself. Mr. Wesley

was poor ; and, on that account, did not obtain the friendship of some, and the plainness of his preaching gave great offence to others. He did not call the sins of his people by soft names ; he reproved those who were dishonest, untruthful, or vicious, and he, therefore, had many enemies.

But God never forsook him. Often when in his sorest troubles, help came from some unexpected friend. At one time, he was so poor that he had only six shillings in the house, and heavy debts were pressing upon him. His wife was very ill at the time, the weather was cold, and they had no coals in the house ; the six shillings had to be spent in firing. But the next morning there came to him a letter from a lady who lived at some distance, and into whose heart God had put a feeling that her friend needed help ; in this letter was a bank note for ten pounds ; and Mr. Wesley said, “ Never came anything more like a gift from heaven.”

Once he was imprisoned for debt in Lincoln Castle ; he had only ten shillings in his possession when he was sent to prison. While here, his wife sold her rings to support him, and then some kind friends, who knew that his debts had not been brought about by carelessness or by extravagance, but by misfortunes, delivered him out of his difficulties, and he returned to his parsonage.

But he had other misfortunes to bear besides

poverty—trials that were far harder. Several of his children died while they were young; and in the year 1702 his house was burnt down. I will tell you about this in his own words.

“On the last day of July, 1702, a fire broke out in my house, by some sparks which took hold of the thatch this dry time, and consumed about two-thirds of it before it could be quenched. I was at the lower end of the town to visit a sick person. As I was returning they brought me the news. I got a horse, rode up, and heard by the way that my wife, children, and books, were saved; for which, God be praised, as well as for what He has taken. They were all together in my study, and the fire under them. When it broke out, my wife got two of the children in her arms, and ran through the smoke and fire; but one of them was left in the hurry till the other cried for her, and the neighbours ran in and got her out through the fire, as they did my books, and most of my goods.”

The rebuilding of the parsonage house cost the poor rector sixty pounds, an expense he could ill afford; but he seems throughout all his trials to have had a most cheerful spirit. It was not in him to murmur and repine; he seems always to have thought with gratitude of the mercies he *had*, which kept him from ungratefully grumbling at his troubles or sighing after those things God saw fit to withhold. I recommend

every boy and girl who reads this to cultivate this spirit, if they wish to go happily through the world. Let them take for a motto two lines of a poem written by Mr. Wesley (for he was a poet as well as a prose writer and a preacher) :—

“Let earth go where it will, I’ll not repine,
Nor can unhappy be while heaven is mine !”

CHAPTER III.

SAVED FROM THE BURNING.

HAVING thus told you much of the father and mother of the Wesley family, it is quite time that I should tell you more particularly about John Wesley, though, as children are so formed and moulded by their home training, it was needful that you should know something of his parents. You will see, in the course of his life, how the father's economical, sin-rebuking spirit was reproduced in the son, and how much he owed to the gentle, loving counsels of his mother, and to the excellent training he received from her.

John Wesley was born at Epworth, on the 17th of June, 1703. He was the second son,—or rather, I should say, the second son who grew up to manhood. His elder brother, named Samuel, was born in 1692, so that there was a great difference in their ages.

Samuel Wesley was the first-born, and was named after his father. He did not attempt to speak until he was five years old, and it was feared he never would. To their surprise he began at once. He had a cat of which he was very fond, and he would play

with it for an hour at a time. One day the little boy was missing; they searched everywhere, but in vain. At length Mrs. Wesley became frightened, and called out his name louder than before. To her surprise and joy, she heard a voice from under the table, saying, "Here I am, mother." There were Samuel and his puss. And from that day he spoke, not only without any difficulty, but with remarkably good sense.

We hear nothing special of John's early childhood till the year 1709, when he was six years old. The Rectory of Epworth was then burnt down for the second time, and John nearly perished in the fire.

This sad event took place in winter time, on the 9th of February, 1709. Mr. Wesley was awakened out of sleep by a cry of "Fire! Fire!" from the street. He opened his bed-room door, and to his astonishment found the house full of smoke, and the roof so burned that it was ready to fall in. He directed his wife and two girls to escape as quickly as they possibly could. Meanwhile Mr. Wesley burst open the nursery-door, where the maid was sleeping with five children. She took up the youngest and bade the others follow her. The three eldest did so, but John was not awakened even by all this commotion, and in the alarm and confusion it was not noticed that he was left behind. When they had got into the hall, Mr. Wesley found that he had left the keys of the outer doors upstairs. He

ran up and returned with them only just in time, for the staircase now took fire. When they opened the street-door a strong north-east wind drove in the flames with such violence that they could not escape that way. They contrived, however, by various means, to get out of the burning house; some of the children got through the windows, others through the door that led into the garden. Mrs. Wesley escaped with great difficulty; she was ill at the time, and could not manage to climb up to the windows, nor could she reach the garden-door. Three times she endeavoured to get through the street-door, but was always driven back by the flames. In this awful moment she turned to the Saviour for help, and then with renewed courage tried once more to get out. To use her own words, she "waded through the fire," unclothed as she was, and mercifully escaped with only a little scorching of her hands and face.

Meanwhile John, who had been overlooked in all this confusion and dismay, was heard crying in the nursery. His father ran to the stairs, and would have gone up them, but they were so nearly consumed that they would not bear his weight. In his despair, feeling utterly unable to help his son, he fell upon his knees in the hall, and in agony of soul commended his child to God.

And how was this fearful time passing with John? He had at length been awakened by the light and

noise, and finding it impossible to escape by the door, since the staircase was in flames, he climbed upon a chest that stood near a window, and he was then seen from the yard. It was a moment of terrible suspense. There was no time to procure a ladder,—every instant was too precious for that,—so one man was hoisted on the shoulders of another, and thus he was rescued from the flames. A moment more and it would have been too late, for the roof now fell in with a tremendous crash.

Years after John himself wrote an account of this event, which is too interesting to be omitted ; but you will better understand his danger if I describe the situation of the rooms in the rectory.

You already know that the house was principally of timber with a thatched roof, so that you can imagine how rapidly a fire would make progress. The house contained three stories. On the ground floor were a kitchen, a hall, and a parlour. Above were three square rooms, overlooking the front garden and the High-street of Epworth. Above were three rooms, right in the roof, with sloping ceilings.

“I remember,” said John Wesley, many years after, “all the circumstances as distinctly as though it were but yesterday. Seeing the room was very light, I called to the maid to take me up. But none answering, I put my head out of the curtains, and saw streaks of fire on the top of the room. I got up and ran to

the door, but could get no further, all beyond it being in a blaze. I then climbed up on a chest, which stood near the window. One in the yard saw me, and proposed running to fetch a ladder. Another answered, 'There will not be time ; but I have thought of another expedient. Here, I will fix myself against the wall ; lift a light man, and set him upon my shoulders.' They did so ; and he took me out of the window. Just then the whole roof fell in, but it fell inwards, or we had all been crushed at once. When they brought me into the house where my father was, he cried out, 'Come, neighbours, let us kneel down ! let us give thanks to God ! He has given me all my eight children ; let the house go ; I am rich enough.' "

You cannot read this without feeling how brave and self-possessed this little boy was. And I believe we may attribute it greatly to the fact that he already knew something of the protecting love of God, and that knowledge, believe me, can cast out human fear. No boys or girls can be truly brave, in the highest sense of the word, till they have learnt to rest in the Providence of God, and to commit their way to Him. And to those who are naturally of a timid nature, I can only say, dwell much on the loving care of the Infinite Father, think constantly of His watchfulness over His little ones, and get the habit of running to Him in *all* times of danger or doubt ; not in extreme cases only, but in the every-day trials and little difficulties which

come to every child. You will never run to Him in vain, and He will make your heart firm and brave.

The day after the fire, as Mr. Wesley was walking in the garden, looking at the ruins of his home, he found a part of a leaf of a Polyglot Bible; it was nearly all burnt, but one small portion had escaped, on it these were the only legible words: "Go sell all that thou hast, and take up thy cross, and follow Me."

Many valuable papers were utterly destroyed in the fire; among them many of Mr. Wesley's own compositions, for I have told you he was a writer. One hymn (and, I believe, the tune which he had composed for it) was saved. It was this one:—

"Behold the Saviour of mankind
Nailed to the shameful tree;
How vast the love that Him inclined
To bleed and die for thee!

"Hark! how He groans, while nature shakes,
And earth's strong pillars bend,
The temple's veil in sunder breaks,
The solid marbles rend!"

Mr. Wesley bore all this great loss like a Christian philosopher. He said to his wife, in allusion to the whole of their furniture having been burnt up, "We have now little more than Adam and Eve had when they went into housekeeping."

The wonderful preservation of their son John made a great impression on the hearts of his parents. From

some lines which Mrs. Wesley wrote two years afterwards, it is evident how anxious she was that the life which God had so mercifully spared should be devoted to His service :—

“What shall I render to the Lord for all His mercies? The little unworthy praise that I can offer is so mean and contemptible an offering, that I am even ashamed to tender it. But, Lord, accept it for the sake of Christ, and pardon the deficiency of the sacrifice.

“I would offer Thee myself, and all that Thou hast given me; and I would resolve—O give me grace to do it—that the remainder of my life shall be all devoted to Thy service. And I do intend to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child that Thou hast so mercifully provided for, than ever I have been; that I may do my endeavour to instil into his mind the principles of Thy true religion and virtue. Lord, give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently, and bless my attempts with good success.”

Beneath a portrait of John Wesley, in reference to this event, are these appropriate words: “Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?”

I am sorry to say that it is believed that this second fire at Epworth was not accidental; but was the wicked work of some one who hated the good rector.

It cost much to rebuild it, and added greatly to Mr. Wesley's money difficulties. You will wonder what became of the eight children while the house was

being rebuilt; they were taken in by different kind families in the neighbourhood, and remained scattered till a new house arose on the ruins of the old one. But when Mr. and Mrs. Wesley got their little flock together again, new difficulties arose. The children, away from their influence, had learnt bad habits; rude ways and rude words were for the first time seen and heard at the rectory; they had been allowed to run wild, and had, I suspect, been indulged by their kind-hearted but unwise friends; and they had much to learn and unlearn. Soon, however, Mrs. Wesley's careful management and prayerful efforts were rewarded. The children gradually settled into their old ways, and I am quite sure were far happier under their mother's firm, though gentle rule, than they had been when permitted to follow their own foolish desires.

In the account of the fire, you noticed, no doubt, that the maid "snatched up the youngest" child in her arms when she told the others to follow her. That "youngest child" was a little baby of only a year old. He was Charles Wesley, John's younger brother, and became, in the future, almost as distinguished. Many of his exquisite hymns you know well, but I must speak of him and them by-and-by. Charles Wesley was born at Epworth in 1708.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN WESLEY'S CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

IN April, 1712, John Wesley, and four of the other children, had the small-pox. Mr. Wesley was at that time away in London, attending some sittings of the Convocation, which business obliged him to reside in London for a short time. In one of Mrs. Wesley's letters to her husband, she refers to John's illness, writing—"Jack has borne his disease bravely, like a man, and indeed like a Christian, without any complaint, though he seemed angry at the small-pox when they were sore, as we guessed by his looking sourly at them, for he never said anything."

During Mr. Wesley's absence in London, his place in church was filled by a clergyman who seemed, from his way of preaching, to be very ignorant of the great Gospel truths, and from this it came about that meetings were held at Mrs. Wesley's house on Sunday evenings for prayer, praise, and the study of God's Word. These meetings, which were called in scorn, *conventicles*, came about in the simplest way, and as they probably influenced John's feelings not

a little, I will tell you about them at some length. While Mrs. Wesley found the preaching at the church, during her husband's absence, so unsatisfactory, her attention was drawn to an account of the Moravian missionaries, contained in one of her husband's books. She was deeply affected by the relation of their trials, and delighted with their noble design to convert souls to Christ. She began to think: what can I do for my Lord and Saviour? "At last," she herself says, "it came into my mind, though I am not a man, nor a minister of the Gospel, and so cannot be employed in such a worthy employment as they were, yet if my heart were sincerely devoted to God, and if I were inspired with a true zeal for His glory, and did really desire the salvation of souls, I might do somewhat more than I do." Accordingly, she resolved to set apart, each day, a portion of time to talk to her children, and, as there was only morning service on Sunday, to spend Sunday evening in reading a sermon to her whole family, and talking freely on religious subjects.

The news of this happy way of spending Sunday evening got known to one or two, who asked, as a great favour, to be allowed to come to the Rectory and listen to Mrs. Wesley's readings. Then other neighbours heard of it, and begged also for permission to attend, till at length the number reached more than two hundred persons.

This annoyed the clergyman exceedingly, and he wrote to Mr. Wesley to complain of what was taking place at the Rectory. Her husband, who knew that the law at that time was against "conventicles" (that is, meetings of this kind)—though it seems terribly sad that such a law should ever have existed—advised her to desist. Possibly, brave as he was for himself, he may have feared lest his wife and family should suffer persecution while he was so far from them; and after the twice burning of his house, and the narrow escape they had had the last time for their lives, one can understand his alarm.

But Mrs. Wesley, with the heroism of a true-hearted Christian woman, was not to be daunted nor withheld from her path of usefulness. She wrote a long and eloquent letter to her husband in reply, in which, like a good wife, she promises to desist if he should *command* it; but urges on him all her reasons for desiring to continue her meetings. I will not give you the whole letter, but one or two extracts, to show you how nobly she acted in this difficult matter:—

"What does their calling it a conventicle signify? Does it alter the nature of the thing? or do you think that what they say is a sufficient reason to forbear what has already done so much good, and by the blessing of God, may do much more? . . .

"Besides the constant attendance on the public worship of God, our meeting has wonderfully con-

ciliated the minds of this people towards us, so that we now live in the greatest amity imaginable; and what is still better, they are very much reformed in their behaviour on the Lord's-day; and those who used to be playing in the streets, now come to hear a good sermon read, which is surely more acceptable to Almighty God. . . .

“Some families who seldom went to church now go constantly; and one person, who had not been there for seven years, is now prevailed upon to go with the rest. . . .

“If you do, after all, think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me that you desire me to do it,—for that will not satisfy my conscience,—but send me your positive command, in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment for neglecting this opportunity of doing good, when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The result of this letter was, I believe, that Mr. Wesley withdrew his objections, and the meetings were continued till his return.

In 1714, John Wesley was placed at the Charter-house, a public school in London. His parents wished him to be educated for a clergyman, as was also their desire as regards his elder brother, Samuel, and his younger brother Charles.

John soon became a favourite with his master,

Dr. Walker, on account of his diligent and obedient habits. But, like all boys, he had trials to bear at school, which he had never known in the loving home at Epworth. The older boys seem to have treated the younger ones with great harshness; they deprived the smaller ones of their food, and for a long time John Wesley lived only on bread. Yet he kept in good health, which he ascribes to his obedience to a wish of his father's, that he should run round the Charterhouse garden every morning three times before breakfast.

He must have made great progress in his studies, for at seventeen he was elected to be sent to Christ Church, Oxford, where he was to prepare himself for the ministry.

During the first years that John Wesley spent at Oxford, there was nothing in his way of life to distinguish him from many others. He was cheerful and gay, though studious; and yet from his letters to his mother, we can see that the influence of his home was about him, and that he was anxious about his eternal welfare. When he had been about four years at the University, he was ordained a deacon; the year after, he was elected a Fellow of Lincoln College. After this he returned home, and for about two years assisted his father as curate; and at this period he received "priests' orders"—that is, he was now fully ordained as a clergyman of the Church of England.

Soon after this, he was summoned back to his college, in consequence of a rule that the younger "Fellows" should perform certain duties there in person. This was in the year 1729.

During this time his brother Charles had been entering on his University career, at the college of Christ Church; and when John returned to Oxford, he found his younger brother an important member of a small band of students, who, for reasons you will presently hear, were nicknamed by the others the Holy Club, the Godly Club, the Bible Moths, and the METHODISTS.

Now, what did this little band do to merit the sneers of their fellow-students?

They had commenced by devoting *Sunday evening* to the study of divinity and religious conversation;—does not that remind us of those Sunday evening meetings in Epworth parsonage held by Mrs. Wesley years before? Surely the good seed sown by the mother was already bearing fruit. On the week-night evenings they met together for ordinary studies. But soon the importance of religion above everything began to make itself felt; the study of the Bible, prayer, and mutual intercourse about spiritual concerns, occupied their attention evening after evening, and the result was a marked change in their outward lives. They partook of the Lord's Supper every week; they kept fast-days; they spent much of their time in visiting the sick, and the prisoners in Oxford Castle,

arousing their consciences, exhorting them to repentance, and striving to bring them into the right way. They gave away every farthing they could spare, releasing many poor debtors from the prison, and giving kindly words of counsel and comfort where they could not help. They also kept a brotherly oversight over many of the younger students, trying to keep them from bad company by giving up their own time to them. You can imagine how much self-denial there was in this, and how much it rebuked the sinful, self-indulging ways of most of those around them; hence the contemptuous names fastened on this little band. The amount of good they wrought was immense, and this was no doubt owing to the order and regularity of their proceedings; from which arose a name which thousands upon thousands are now proud to bear—METHODISTS.

And all this time, while working for others, these young men did not neglect their own *personal* work. They were too anxious to do right for that. But in order to have sufficient time for their own studies, they rose very early, and “worked when they worked,” so that no time might be wasted, and that they might have more leisure to give to the good of others. As to the jeerings and reproaches they met with, they did not mind them. “They seldom took any notice of the accusations brought against them for their charitable employments; but if they did make any

reply, it was commonly such a plain and simple one, as if there was nothing more in the case, but that they had just heard such doctrines from their Saviour, and had believed and done accordingly."

John Wesley, on his return to Oxford, immediately joined this society, and his accession to it seems to have given it new vigour. The brothers John and Charles Wesley, Mr. Morgan, James Harvey—the well-known author of "Meditations among the Tombs," and George Whitfield, were its most remarkable members.

The effect on John Wesley of joining this "Club" was very great. He had always been steady and diligent, and anxious about religion; but he seized this opportunity for shaking off such of his old companions as had been a snare to him; he new modelled his life, regulated his studies afresh, and now chose his companions with a view to religious improvement. As a tutor in the college, he had some influence over the young men, and he laboured hard to form in them a just sense of the value of religion; and many, who could not agree with him altogether on this matter, afterwards gratefully acknowledged the good he had done them.

Among other good deeds done by this society, was the support of a school for poor children. It is believed that this was set up by John Wesley himself. Through-

out his whole life he always showed great interest in the welfare of the young.

About this time, or a little earlier, so earnest was his desire to attain spiritual knowledge, that he travelled many miles (and travelling in those days was a very different undertaking to what it is now) to see a "serious man," to talk with him about religion. "Sir," said the man, "you wish to serve God and go to heaven; remember, you cannot serve Him alone; you must therefore *find* companions, or *make* them. *The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.*" I should like my young readers to weigh these words well, and to remember them in the future, especially when they leave their parents' roof. They made a great impression on John Wesley, who, in fact, never forgot them.

Nor was John Wesley the only one of this little band ready to journey in search of truth. We are told that all of these young students used to travel two or three times a year sixty miles to converse with Law, the author of "The Call to a Devout and Holy Life." This journey they all performed on foot to save their money for the poor. Although this Mr. Law exerted much influence over them, I do not think he saw the truths of the Gospel very clearly; or, if he did, he did not clearly place them before these young seekers after truth.

Though the Wesleys met with much discouragement

ment and derision at Oxford, there used to come pleasant, cheering, approving letters from Epworth. Their father wrote :—

“Great is my glorying in you. I am filled with comfort. I am exceeding joyful. . . .

“My daily prayers are that God would keep you humble; and then I am sure that, if you continue to suffer for righteousness’ sake, though it be but in a lower degree, the Spirit of God and of glory shall, in some good measure, rest upon you. And you cannot but feel such a satisfaction in your own minds as you would not part with for all the world. . . .

“I hear my son John has the honour of being called the Father of the Holy Club: if it be so, I am sure I must be the grandfather of it; and I need not say, that I had rather any of my sons should be so dignified and distinguished, than to have the title of His Holiness.”

“His Holiness” is, you know, the title by which Roman Catholics call the Pope—or head of their Church.

In one of his mother’s letters we find the following commendation :—

“I heartily join with your small society in all their pious and charitable actions, which are intended for God’s glory. May you still, in such good works, go on and prosper.”

Their elder brother Samuel, who was in 1732

appointed headmaster of Tiverton School, in Devonshire, thus writes :—

“I cannot say I thought you always in everything right; but I must now say, rather than you and Charles should give over your old course, especially what relates to the castle, I would choose to follow either of you, nay, both of you, to your graves. I cannot advise you better than in the words, ‘Stand thou steadfast as a beaten anvil; for it is the part of a good champion to be flayed alive and to conquer.’”

John Wesley remained at Oxford fifteen years, till 1735. During these years the little society had many discouragements. Some members were removed by circumstances, some forsook them altogether, and the opposition of the ungodly continued to grow. John Wesley was much entreated by his friends to leave the University and settle at Epworth, but he would not do this because he thought he was needed at Oxford.

Looking back to this time, John Wesley says of it that he was not then “converted to God.” He was “trusting to his own works and to his own righteousness,” not believing and resting on the merits of Jesus Christ, and on His merits *alone*. All the good that the members of that band did, all the sacrifices they made, could not save their souls. If they sprang from hearts already converted to God and renewed by the Holy Ghost, then were they acceptable proofs of the

living faith of those who wrought them ; but as means of reconciliation to God or atonement for past sins, they were utterly worthless. My dear young readers, guard against the fatal mistake of thinking that anything you can do can atone for sin ; Christ, and Christ alone, can save you, and you can only bring forth the fruits of righteousness when your sins have been washed away by His blood, and your souls have been born again by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

All this, in these years, John Wesley and his friends seem only to have seen dimly. They were, however, earnestly seeking after God and His truth ; and He, who ever helps the sincere seeker, and will guide all of us, who long after light, out of darkness into His own light, was leading John and Charles to a clearer knowledge of Himself by paths that they then knew not.

And you will be wondering, I daresay, that I have not yet given you any personal description of John Wesley. In stature he was small, but compact, and well formed. His features were regular and delicate, but not feminine ; his eyes were dark, bright, and piercing ; his mouth beautifully formed, showing great self-control. This is what he was outwardly. What he was as a friend and companion may be best gathered from the description given of him by Alexander Knox.

“ His countenance, as well as his conversation, ex-

pressed an habitual gaiety of heart, which nothing but conscious innocence and virtue could have bestowed. He was, in truth, the most perfect specimen of moral happiness I ever saw ; and my acquaintance with him has done more to teach me what a heaven upon earth is implied in the maturity of Christian piety, than all I have elsewhere seen, or heard, or read, except in the sacred volume."

One great characteristic of John Wesley, as a young man, was his generous charity ; and, as years advanced, he still retained, to the highest degree, the generous impulses of youth. His heart grew warmer, not colder, with increasing age. By dint of strict economy and unselfishness, he contrived to give away more money in charity out of a small income, than any man, perhaps, of his time. When he had thirty pounds a year, he lived on twenty-eight, and gave away two pounds ; the next year, receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away thirty-two ; the third year he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two ; the fourth year he received a hundred and twenty pounds, and still living on twenty-eight, he gave to the poor ninety-two ; and so on to the end. On a moderate calculation, it is said, that he gave away in about fifty years, twenty or thirty thousand pounds. This was what he gave in money ; what he gave in time, in talent, in labour, and in love, the remainder of his history will show.

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Years after, when in the full tide of his renown as a public man, the collectors of taxes thought that he had omitted to pay for his "plate" (an article which then was taxed), and asked him to send a return of what he possessed. Imagine their surprise when they received from this noted man the reply, "Two silver spoons, one in London and one at Bristol." So little did he care for the wealth and the possessions of this world! And so little did these tax-collectors understand John Wesley!

CHAPTER V.

IN AMERICA.

IN the year 1735 a sad event took place at Epworth parsonage—the death of Mr. Wesley. All the family were not together at this time, but John and Charles had journeyed from Oxford purposely to be with their father during his last moments on earth, and to comfort their mother in her sorrow.

Samuel Wesley, the eldest son, was unable to be with his family. In a letter written to him by his youngest brother, Charles, there is a full account of his father's last moments, which will interest you most if I give it in his son's own words.

Charles thus writes:—

“DEAR BROTHER,—After all your desire of seeing my father alive, you are at last assured you must see his face no more till raised in incorruption. You have reason to envy us, who could attend him in the last stage of his illness. The few words he uttered I have saved. Some of them were—‘Nothing too much to suffer for heaven. The weaker I am in body, the stronger and more sensible support I feel from God. There is but a step between me and death. To-morrow

I would see you all with me round this table, that we may once more drink of the cup of blessing before we drink of it new in the Kingdom of God. With desire have I desired to eat the passover with you before I die.'

"The next morning he appeared full of faith and peace, which extended even to his body; for he was so much better, that we almost hoped he would have recovered. The fear of death he had entirely conquered; and at last gave up his latest human desires of finishing Job (a work on which he had long been engaged), of paying his debts, and seeing you. He often laid his hand upon my head, and said, 'Be steady. The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom; you shall see it, though I shall not.' To my sister Emily, he said, 'Do not be concerned at my death; God will then begin to manifest himself in my family.' When we were met about him, his usual expression was, 'Now let me hear you talk about heaven.' On my asking him whether he did not feel himself worse, he replied, 'Oh, my Charles, I feel a great deal. God chastens me with strong pain; but I praise Him for it; I thank Him for it; I love Him for it.'

"On the 25th (April) his voice failed him, and nature seemed entirely spent; when on my brother's asking, whether he was not near heaven? he answered distinctly, and with the most of hope and triumph that

could be expressed in sounds, 'Yes, I am.' He spoke once more, just after my brother had prayed. His last words were, 'Now you have done all.' This was about half an hour after six, from which time till sunset he made signs of offering up himself, till my brother having again prayed, the very moment it was finished he expired.

"His passage was so smooth and insensible, that, notwithstanding the stopping of his pulse, and ceasing of all signs of life and motion, we continued over him a good while, in doubt whether the soul was departed or not. My mother, who, for several days before he died, hardly ever went into his chamber but she was carried out again in a fit, was far less shocked at the news than we expected, and told us that 'now she was heard, in his having so easy a death, and her being strengthened, so as to bear it.'"

This good man died on the 30th of April, 1735; he was about seventy years old, but the year of his birth is not exactly known. He had been rector of Epworth for about forty-two years.

On the day of his burial, while his family were sorrowing over their loss, a woman in Epworth caused to be seized for a debt all the live stock on a little farm rented by Mr. Wesley. God, however, was most merciful to the widow, comforting her and raising her up friends; above all, though poor in worldly wealth, she was rich in her children. Till the year 1739 she

divided her time among her children ; after that year she resided in London.

A few months after Mr. Wesley's death, an important event took place in the life of his son John. The living of Epworth was given away to a stranger, and John Wesley seemed settled at Oxford, when a new scene of activity and usefulness was proposed to him. The trustees of the new colony of Georgia, in North America, wanted to send out there persons to preach, not only to the colonists or settlers, but to the Indians. They asked Wesley and one of his friends to go out there as clergymen and missionaries. John would give them no decided answer till he had consulted his mother ; he rightly felt that, doubly since his father's death, he was bound to cherish and comfort her.

But by this time you know enough of Mrs. Wesley's character to be certain that she would never let her own comfort hinder the cause of Christ. Her noble answer was worthy of herself: " Had I twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more."

This decided John and Charles to accept the invitation. The thought of being missionaries had great charms for them both ; their father, in his younger days, had longed for such a field of labour, and doubtless they had often talked about such work with him. And you will remember the account of the Danish or Moravian Missions which had so deeply touched Mrs.

Wesley, and was the cause of those famous meetings at the Rectory twenty-three years before.

On the 14th of October, 1735, about six months after their father's death, John and Charles were on ship-board crossing the Atlantic Ocean. They sailed from Gravesend in a vessel which was taking out General Oglethorpe, the governor of the colony, and a party of twenty-six German Christians, members of the Moravian Church, who with their pastor were intending to settle in Georgia. These men were simple, sincere believers; from them the two brothers learned more of Divine truths during the voyage of a few weeks than they had yet learned. They were altogether three months before they set foot on American ground, so you see the voyage was far more tedious than it is now. How they spent their time is thus described by John Wesley:—

“Our common way of living was this. From four in the morning till five each of us used private prayer; from five till seven we read the Bible together, carefully comparing it with the writings of the earliest ages. At seven we breakfasted. At eight were the public prayers. From nine to twelve I usually learned German, and Mr. Delamotte (a friend who went out with them) learned Greek. My brother wrote sermons, and Mr. Ingham (another friend) instructed the children. At twelve we met to give an account to one another what we had done since our last meeting,

and what we designed to do before next. About one we dined. The time from dinner to four we spent in reading to those whom each of us had in charge, or in speaking to them seriously, as need required. At four were the evening prayers: when either the second lesson was explained (as it always was in the morning), or the children were catechised and instructed before the congregation. From five to six we again used private prayer. From six to seven I read in our cabin to two or three of the passengers (of whom there were about eighty English on board), and each of my brethren to a few more in theirs. At seven I joined with the Germans in their public service; while Mr. Ingham was reading between the decks to as many as desired to hear. At eight we met again to exhort and instruct one another. Between nine and ten we went to bed, where neither the roaring of the sea, nor the motion of the ship, could take away the refreshing sleep which God gave us."

The governor of the colony, General Oglethorpe, appears to have treated John and Charles Wesley with kindness during the voyage. He seems to have been a man of passionate temper, peculiar views, and very unreliable in his friendship. But John Wesley had no fear of man, and while he always treated General Oglethorpe with the respect and consideration due to his position, he never once deviated from

his sense of right for the sake of gaining the governor's favour.

On one occasion, during the voyage, Wesley did not scruple to utter a rebuke, though it was certainly given in the gentlest manner. The circumstance was as follows :—

There was one day heard proceeding from the governor's cabin a tremendous noise. Above all else the voice of the governor was heard in angry, threatening tones. He had just discovered that his servant had drunk up his choicest wine, and his rage was great. In his passion he had ordered the servant to be tied hand and foot, and to be taken over to a man-of-war which was sailing with them. This punishment was in reality far more severe than it sounds; the hardships on board a man-of-war were great, and the discipline fearfully strict. No wonder, therefore, that the servant resisted, entreated, and bewailed his fate. In the midst of the commotion, John Wesley appeared on the scene, and asked for a lighter punishment to be inflicted on the culprit. "The rascal should have taken care how he used me so, for I never forgive," was the General's reply. "Then," said John, looking calmly at him, "I hope you never sin." The quiet manner, the simple words, went home, and the General stood confounded. "There, villain," he cried, throwing his keys at his servant, "take my keys, and behave better for the

future." And as no more offences are recorded of him, we may hope that his experience had taught him a lesson.

On their voyage the ship encountered several storms, one of which was very violent and attended with great danger. John Wesley now discovered that he had not conquered the fear of death, and his first doubts of his own spiritual safety seem to have entered his mind. His German friends had no fear; in the midst of the storm they sang hymns, and their conduct much impressed him.

He says, "I had long before observed the great seriousness of their behaviour. Of their humility they had given a continual proof, by performing those servile offices for the other passengers which none of the English would undertake; for which they desired, and would receive, no pay, saying, it was good for their proud hearts, and their loving Saviour had done more for them! And every day had given them occasion of showing a meekness which no injury could move. If they were pushed, struck, or thrown down, they rose again and went away; but no complaint was found in their mouth. There was now an opportunity of trying whether they were delivered from the spirit of fear, as well as from that of pride, anger, and revenge. In the midst of the Psalm with which their service began, the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between

the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sung on. I asked one of them afterwards, 'Where you not afraid?' He answered, 'I thank God, no.' I asked, 'But were not your women and children afraid?' He answered mildly, 'No, our women and children are not afraid to die!'"

John and Charles Wesley reached Savannah river, in Georgia, on February 5th, 1736. As the colony had only been founded three years, you may imagine there were plenty of discomforts, but these the two brothers minded not. They, however, so seriously affected the health of Charles that he nearly died; and when, soon after his recovery, his duties required him to return to England, he did not ever again visit America.

Two days after landing, John Wesley met with one of the pastors of the Germans, named Spangenberg, whose piety seems to have been of the same thorough kind as that of the Germans on board ship. Mr. Wesley was much pleased with him, and wisely asked his advice with regard to his own conduct. "He answered," writes John Wesley, "'My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions:—Have you the witness in yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God?' I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, 'Do you know Jesus Christ?'

I paused, and said, 'I know He is the Saviour of the world.' 'True,' replied he, 'but do you know He has saved *you*?' I answered, 'I hope He has died to save me.' He only added, 'Do you know yourself?' I said, 'I do;' but I fear they were vain words. So a simple man was wiser."

But Wesley remembered the words; they were as seeds sown in good ground. God was gradually preparing His servant for the mighty work He had appointed him to do.

Meanwhile anxieties, perplexities, and even persecutions awaited the brothers in Georgia. After the departure of Charles, the position of John Wesley seems to have been most uncomfortable. General Oglethorpe behaved to him throughout in a most capricious manner; at one time treating him with kindness, and speaking of him in terms of the greatest esteem, at others loading him with petty indignities, reproaches, hindering his usefulness, and even threatening his life. There is a possibility that Wesley was mistaken in some of his views, &c., at this time, and did not act in the conciliating, gentle manner in which he would have acted, under similar circumstances, in after years; but there is no doubt that the enmity of the governor and his party was owing to Wesley's conscientious regard to duty, which was a continual reproach to themselves, and to his faithfully reprov-
ing all sin or inconsistent behaviour.

Amid all this trouble, he wrote to his brother: "God, you believe, has much work to do in America. I believe so too, and begin to enter into the designs which He has over *me*. I see why He brought me hither; and I hope ere long to say with Ignatius, 'It is now that I BEGIN to be a disciple of Christ.' God direct you to pray for me. Adieu."

Mr. Charles Wesley left America early in the year 1737; he came home by way of Charlestown, and was deeply affected by what he saw and heard of the horrors of the slave trade. He little thought then of those future years, when in dismal swamp, or amid frightful tortures, his hymns would soothe and comfort by lifting the souls of the poor blacks heavenwards.

John Wesley left the colony on the 3d of December, 1737, after a residence there of nearly a year and nine months. His motives for leaving were: no prospect of obtaining justice against his enemies, his disappointment in being prevented from preaching to the Indians as he had expected to do, and the strongly urged advice of his friends. He did not, however, by any means, consider these two years lost as regards his own progress; as regards the colony, he had sown the seed, and another would reap the harvest. He was succeeded there by his old pupil, George Whitfield, who had been a member of the Oxford Club, and who was very successful in Georgia.

On reviewing the results of his mission, John Wesley thus writes:—"I went to America to convert the Indians; but oh, who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well,—nay, and believe myself,—while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain.'"

And again: "It is upwards of two years since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learnt myself in the meantime? Why (what I least of all suspected), that I, who went to America to convert others, was never converted myself."

Thus bitterly wrote Wesley against himself. Soon the sorrow and darkness were to pass away, and he would rejoice in knowing more and more fully the love of the Saviour towards him.

CHAPTER VI.

A GREAT CHANGE.

JOHAN WESLEY reached England on the 1st of February, 1738. While he had been abroad, a great work had been going on in London, Bristol, and other parts of the south of England, under the preaching of Whitfield, who had sailed for Georgia from the Downs only a few hours before the vessel which brought Wesley back from thence cast anchor there, the two ships in fact passing in sight of each other.

As soon as Wesley arrived in London, he hastened to renew his connection with the Moravians. Peter Bohler, a minister of the Moravian Church, was chosen by God to be specially helpful to Wesley at this time. The conversations they had together convinced him more and more of the folly and sin of a man trusting at all to his own righteousness, and he was led to believe in Christ with all his heart and soul, with the simple trust of a little child. "Through Peter Bohler," says Wesley, "in the hand of the great God, I was clearly convinced of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved."

For a little time he was very sorrowful at the thought of his great mistake, and would even have left off preaching, had not his friend advised him to the contrary. But this state of feeling did not last long. "Soon after this," he says, "while hearing one describe the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, in Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

And now that he had come into the full enjoyment of knowing himself a pardoned child of God, he brought forth, in greatest measure, the "fruit of the Spirit." He more than ever loved every child of God, and wrought with even greater zeal for the salvation of mankind. But with how different a feeling to that with which he had worked before. Then, though he had believed in Christ, he had evidently thought of making himself acceptable to God by his good deeds; now, he never thought of himself or of the value of his work. Christ was his, and he was Christ's, and he was willing, nay, joyful, to spend and be spent in his Master's service, looking for no reward.

In May 1738, John, and Charles (who experienced the same change of feelings as his brother) began to form themselves into a religious society, which met

in Fetter-lane. This has been called the first Methodist Society in London. Mr. Wesley says, "The first rise of Methodism was in November 1729, when four of us met together at Oxford. The second was at Savannah, in April 1736, when twenty or thirty persons met at my house. The last was at London on this day, when forty or fifty of us agreed to meet together every Wednesday evening, in order to have free conversation, begun and ended with singing and prayer."

In the latter part of the year 1738, Mr. Whitfield returned from Georgia, and he and Mr. Wesley immediately again became intimately associated. I think that this will be a good opportunity of referring to Mr. Whitfield's labours, as there is no doubt that it was his influence and example which led Mr. Wesley to preach in the open fields—a course productive to thousands of greater blessings than we can know till that great day when John Wesley's work will be apparent in the souls converted to Christ.

And, first, I must tell you, that the style and manner of these two men in preaching were very different. Wesley was very calm; he did not raise his voice to shrill, or even very loud tones, and the *matter* of his discourses corresponded to the manner. He reasoned calmly, yet with such force that, at his words, hardened hearts were melted, and tears came from eyes

that had long ceased to weep. Mr. Whitfield, on the contrary, was very energetic in his style, appealing chiefly to the feelings of his hearers. Both of these great men, in different ways, won many thousands to the Saviour; for the Holy Spirit of God works by different instruments, and uses each one of us, if we submit to His influence, for the glory of God and the good of man.

The thought of preaching in the open air was first suggested to Whitfield by the crowds that came to hear him. When he mentioned his thought to some of his friends, they looked on it as mere madness; and he did not begin the practice until he went to Bristol, when, finding the use of some of the churches denied him, he preached on a hill at Kingswood to the colliers; after he had done this two or three times, his congregation is said to have amounted to twenty thousand persons. His preaching, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, effected a great reform among these rough men. "The first discovery," he tells us, "of their being touched was the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks, as they came out of their coal-pits."

After this, Whitfield preached frequently in the open air near London, and in other parts of the country, to assembled thousands. Remarkable instances are related of the manner in which he im-

pressed his hearers. Once, when preaching before the seamen at New York, in the course of his sermon he uttered the following words:—

“ Well, my boys, we have a clear sky, and are making fine headway over a smooth sea, before a light breeze, and we shall soon lose sight of land. But what means this sudden lowering of the heavens, and that dark cloud arising from beneath the western horizon? Hark! Don't you hear distant thunder? Don't you see those flashes of lightning? There is a storm gathering! Every man to his duty! How the waves rise, and dash against the ship! The air is dark! The tempest rages! Our masts are gone! The ship is on her beam ends! What next?”

It is said that the tars, carried away not only by his words, but by the passionate eloquence of his voice and manner, exclaimed with united voices, “ Take to the long boat ! ”

And I think that when he came afterwards to explain to them that in the tempests which assail the soul Christ is the only refuge from utter destruction, they would remember this solemn truth all the more because of the homely and energetic manner in which he had shown them their danger by an illustration drawn from their every-day life.

At another time, when he went to Kendal, in Westmoreland, during the time of the Scotch rebellion in 1745, he learnt that the loyalty of the town had been

strongly shown by the number of recruits it had sent to the royal army. Mr. Whitfield, in his first sermon in the market-place, turned this to advantage, and, adapting his sermon to the circumstances of his hearers, thus commenced :—

“ Oyez, Oyez, Oyez, ye loyal men of Kendal, having heard with what readiness you have enlisted under the banners of his Majesty King George, to defend him and his throne against all its enemies, I am proud to come among you, since I hold a commission, not from any earthly potentate, but from the King of Kings, with power to enlist you under the banner of the Cross, and lead you to triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil.”

Such a commencement did not fail to attract attention, nor did Mr. Whitfield fail to use it to enforce the great truths of Christianity on his audience.

But having now told you something of Mr. Whitfield's labour, I must return to John Wesley.

A few weeks after the important change of feelings experienced by him, Mr. Wesley set out for Germany, to visit the Moravian brethren at their dwelling-place at Herrnhut. One can imagine how, at this time, his heart would specially turn towards them, because on board ship, and again in America and in London, members of their community had been instruments of good to his soul. One pleasing memento we have of his intercourse with Count Zinzendorf, the head

of the Moravians, in that well-known hymn commencing—

“Jesus, Thy robe of righteousness,
My beauty is, my glorious dress,”

which was composed by Count Zinzendorf, in 1739, and translated by John Wesley in the same year.

Wesley returned to England from Germany in 1738, and found that, owing to his changed views on religion, the churches in town and country were closed against his preaching in them. On his first arrival from America he had been invited to preach in London; and the first sermon which Wesley preached in the Metropolis was from the words, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” He was then deeply feeling this very subject, and we cannot wonder that his discourse was most impressive, and little likely to find favour with those whose religion was an outward form only, not a living, loving reality. After the close of his sermon, he was informed that he was not to preach again in the pulpit from which it was delivered.

On the next Sunday he preached at St. Andrew's, Holborn; but in a style of earnest zeal to save the lost, so different to anything to which the congregation were accustomed, and so contrary to the passive, worldly views which then generally regulated the sermons of the clergymen of the Established Church,

that he was in like manner informed that he must preach there no more.

After his return from Germany, the same feeling arose against him, and the churches were closed against both the brothers. Wesley was thus driven from the pulpits of the Established Church, and was led to form that separate establishment which has been such a blessing to our land. And since he and his brother might not preach in churches, where, as clergymen, they might rightly claim a place from which to be heard, they preached everywhere—in meeting-houses, in private houses, on commons, in wild country places, on the highroad, or in fields—wherever people would hear them: and thus the malice and prejudice of man was overruled by the hand of God for good.

“But,” some one once said to John Wesley, “it is very improper for you to act in this manner. It is not at all *regular*. You ought to get a parish, and be satisfied with that!”

“*The world is my parish,*” was the noble and characteristic reply.

But it was not immediately after his return from Germany that John Wesley commenced open air preaching. Diffidence, or other causes, kept him back, till one day, being with Whitfield at Blackheath, where 14,000 people were assembled, Wesley was induced by his friend to try. He then preached frequently on Kennington Common, and in the fields

near Bristol. Long afterwards, referring to this subject, Wesley writes :—

“Forty years ago I began preaching in the fields, and that for two reasons—first, I was not suffered to preach in the churches; second, no parish church could contain the congregations.”

This movement of field-preaching gave to “Methodism,” as it was now generally called, the appearance of having separated entirely from the Church. Accordingly, when, in the year 1739, Wesley’s mother withdrew her former prejudices against this change in her son’s views, and became one of his congregation, it gave great concern and grief to her eldest son, Samuel, who was also a clergyman. From this time till her death, in 1742, Mrs. Wesley continued to live with her son John, and to attend his ministry.

Before leaving the subject of the great change which John and Charles Wesley had experienced, I will write down a hymn, composed, in reference to this change of heart, by Charles, which will describe their feelings better than any words of mine :—

“Long have I seemed to serve Thee, Lord,
With unavailing pain :
Fasted, and prayed, and read Thy Word,
And heard it preached in vain.

“Oft did I with th’ assembly join,
And near Thine altar drew ;
A form of Godliness was mine,
The power I never knew.

“I rested in the outward law ;
Nor knew its deep design :
The length and breadth I never saw,
And height of love Divine.

“To please Thee thus, at length I see,
Vainly I hoped and strove ;
For what are outward things to Thee
Unless they spring from love ?

“I see the perfect law requires
Truth in the inward parts ;
Our full consent, our whole desires,
Our undivided hearts.

“But I of means have made my boast,
Of means an idol made ;
The spirit in the letter lost,
The substance in the shade.

“Where am I now, or what my hope ?
What can my weakness do ?
Jesus, to Thee my soul looks up ;
’Tis THOU must make it new.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE ZEALOUS PREACHER.

THOUGH Wesley preached in the open air, the Methodists soon erected meeting-houses for their gifted preachers. The first was begun to be built in the Horse-Fair, Bristol, on the 12th of May, 1739; and, in London, Mr. Wesley met his little society at his preaching-house, near Moorfields, which was generally known by the name of the Foundry, because it had originally been built for the casting of cannon. In this place he regularly preached, and it was soon thronged with hearers.

In November 1739, Samuel Wesley, the eldest of the three brothers, died. He was educated first at Westminster School, then at Oxford, where he became a clergyman, but he never obtained any preferment in the Church. On his epitaph, it is recorded that he was an excellent preacher, adding, that his "best sermon was the constant example of an edifying life." He did not cordially approve of the doings of his brothers; but then he lived only to see the beginning of Methodism: his views would have altered had he lived longer. He was a clever writer and poet.

In the year 1742, Mr. John Wesley visited his native place—the Epworth where his happy childhood had been passed. An old servant and some poor old people found him out, and it soon became known that he was there. On the Sunday, he offered to assist the resident clergyman, either in reading the prayers or in preaching, but the offer was refused; and the clergyman in his sermon took care to denounce Wesley's "enthusiasm." After the sermon, it was announced in the churchyard, by one of Wesley's followers, that "Mr. Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, designs to preach here at six o'clock."

At the appointed time a great congregation had assembled, and John Wesley, from his father's grave, preached from, "The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." After this time he preached on several occasions in Epworth churchyard.

Later in this year, while at Bristol, Mr. Wesley heard of his mother's serious illness, and hastened up to town. He reached home on Tuesday, July 20th, and found Mrs. Wesley on the borders of eternity, free from all doubts and fears, and only desiring to "depart and to be with Christ" as soon as He should call her.

Mr. Wesley thus describes her last moments on earth:—"Friday, July 30th, about three in the afternoon, I went to my mother, and found her end was

near. I sat down on the bed-side. She was in her last conflict, unable to speak, but, I believe, quite sensible. Her look was calm and serene, and her eyes fixed upward, while we commended her soul to God. From three to four the silver cord was loosening, and the wheel breaking at the cistern; and then, without any struggle, or sigh, or groan, the soul was set at liberty. We stood round the bed, and fulfilled her last request, uttered a little before she lost her speech, ‘Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God.’ ”

So gently passed away Susanna Wesley, whose name can never fail to be held in affectionate remembrance as “The Mother of the Wesleys.”

Oh, that the children who read this would so live as to bring honour to *their* parents. Think of their love towards you while you are weak and troublesome; of how they toil for you, and bear with you: surely, if you think of this rightly, you will acknowledge that the least you can do is to give them your love and obedience, and so to act that no disgrace of yours shall ever cast dishonour on their name and memory.

From this time Wesley’s life was spent in preaching, travelling, writing books, and labouring in all other possible ways for the welfare of perishing souls. No man ever gave himself up more entirely to this object in our times; he prosecuted it with zeal and deter-

mination, with method and skilful management. Not an hour, scarce even a minute, was taken from the service of Christ. He gave himself no rest, seldom riding less than forty, fifty, or sixty miles a day; even on his journeys from place to place he read and wrote; and he generally preached three or four times, sometimes five times, a day. For a long time he usually travelled on horseback; latterly he used a chaise; and it is said that "there could not be an instance found, during the space of fifty years, wherein the severest weather hindered him even for one day." Before this little history closes, I will relate to you a remarkable instance of this.

One of his favourite places for preaching was a great open space near Moorfields. He preached in his gown usually, and around him were thousands of dirty ragged men and women listening. He was a small man, particularly neat and clean in his appearance (he was ever a great advocate of cleanliness and order); his face has been described as "angelic," the expression calm and lofty, the features regular and delicate, yet not effeminate, his mouth showing great self-control: in truth, the face of one chosen by God to win by love, and to rule by that power which comes of self-control and earnest purpose sanctified by religion. Dear young readers, if any of you wish to be great, to be a leader and a hero like Wesley, learn from his life that true greatness begins by giving

up self and becoming born into a higher, nobler nature through the Spirit.

As he stood there, amid those thousands, the small figure, with the firm mouth and the bright steady eye, that seemed to see through his hearers and to command their attention, a deep silence would fall upon the crowd. His clear voice would be heard speaking reverently of the living God, who was so near to each one of them, though they lived as though they knew it not—of the living soul, which might enjoy such intense happiness or taste such awful woe—of a Saviour dying for lost sinners that they might come and find pardon and be born again by the Holy Spirit.

And as he spoke, many would weep and sob as if their hearts were bursting with remorse, with penitence, or, happily, with the joy of having found their Saviour; while others would gaze at him with fixed and motionless features, more like statues than living beings, scarcely daring to breathe lest they should lose a word.

This rapt attention was gained by no studied oratory, by no passionate appeal to their feelings merely; it was produced by his own deep earnestness. He spoke to men whom he felt were dying. He realised the awful danger of the unconverted. He loved them for the Saviour's sake with a great love; and out of that fear and love his heart spoke by his lips. No wonder that it went to their hearts and produced such fruits!

He did not greatly raise his voice in preaching, and yet he seems always to have been well heard. He did not approve of too long sermons; and advised his followers to avoid long discourses. More than once in his *Journal* he has recorded the death of men who were martyrs to long and loud preaching. In a letter to one of his followers, on this subject, he writes: "Scream no more, at the peril of your soul. God now warns you by me, whom He has set over you. Speak as earnestly as you can, but do not scream. Speak with all your heart, but with a moderate voice. It was said of our Lord, 'He shall not *cry*;' the word properly means, 'He shall not *scream*.' Herein be a follower of me, as I am of Christ. I often speak loud, often vehemently, but I never scream. I never strain myself; I dare not. I know it would be a sin against God and my own soul."

But crowds came to hear Wesley at other places than Moorfields. Morning, noon, and evening, he went about the country proclaiming the tidings of great joy—of a good Shepherd seeking lost sheep, a Divine Father for those who thought themselves fatherless. He went into Newgate and preached the Gospel to the prisoners, and in the dismal cells of the condemned—he travelled, unprotected, among the colliers, the miners, and, worst of all, among the wreckers on the coast; often his life was in great danger, but he knew no fear. Sometimes in some

dreary place he might have been seen standing on a large piece of rock, groups sitting on the stones or grass round him; whole families that had walked miles to hear him preach, leaving their little cottages on the moors empty and unprotected. There you would see a father with his little ones, the mother with her baby, miners with faces and clothes black from their mines; fishermen with rough weather-beaten faces; all, more or less, gazing on the preacher with wild eager interest. Presently, in calm, but earnest tones, Wesley would open the service with an appropriate prayer, and at the first sound of his voice a great hush would fall on that strange assembly. Then would follow his sermon, listened to as dying men would listen to the advice of a medical man who could tell them how and where to find a cure; and then, first struck up by the few close round the preacher, then caught up by nearly all the vast multitude, would ring out the words of some of Charles Wesley's stirring hymns. Fancy for yourselves the thrilling and intensely grand effect of such verses as the following, sung by hundreds in the open air:—

“ All ye that pass by
To Jesus draw nigh;
To you is it nothing that Jesus should die?
Your ransom and peace,
Your surety He is,
Come, see, if there ever was sorrow like His.

“ He dies to atone
For sins not His own,
Your debt He hath paid, and your work He hath done,
Ye all may receive
The peace He did leave,
Who made intercession, ‘ My Father, forgive.’

“ For you and for me
He prayed on the tree ;
The prayer is accepted, the sinner is free :
The sinner am I,
Who on Jesus rely,
And come for the pardon God cannot deny.

“ His death is my plea,
My Advocate see,
And hear the blood speak that hath answered for me :
He purchased the grace
Which now I embrace ;
O Father, Thou know’st He hath died in my place.”

Often the poor tinnerns would wait long before day-break round the cottage where John Wesley had got a night’s lodging, in order to hear a sermon from him before they went to work, singing hymns while they waited till he was ready to preach to them.

Now, possibly, my dear readers, while you are reading all this, and are led to admire John Wesley’s love and zeal, you are not sufficiently feeling the example his life presents to you. You may never be called upon to preach or to write. God may have other work for you to do. But the spirit that animated Wesley may be yours, and will be, if you are truly

a child of God. God will judge you and all of us by our *opportunities*; and if you love Jesus as Wesley did, you, too, will find your opportunities for serving Him heartily and well.

But there are one or two things in Wesley's character which even the smallest child may imitate, with advantage to him or herself, and with comfort to all around. And one was his love of order, of neatness, and of simplicity; it is said of him that in his room a book was never misplaced, nor a scrap of paper left unheeded; and yet how much he had to do. Another thing was the value he attached to time. He was generally most gentle, but in this matter very particular. Once, when hindered by an unpunctual man, he was heard to say, "I have lost ten minutes for ever!" Some one once said, "You need not be in a hurry, sir." Wesley replied, "A hurry! no; I have no time to be in a hurry."

What comfort there would be in some families if the boys and girls would learn this lesson. What discomfort, nay, what accidents arise from that spirit of "putting off" duty, which tempts people to hurry and to "scuffle" in the vain hope of making up for lost time.

One of Wesley's sayings was, "How precious is every portion of our life."

This sense of the value of time he carried not only into his own work, but into the society of which he

was the leader. It was one of their rules that preachers should deliver a sermon on Sunday mornings at five o'clock, whenever twenty hearers could be brought together. "Early preaching," he once said, "is the glory of the Methodists; whenever this is dropt, they will dwindle into nothing." Wesley himself, for above sixty years of his life, constantly rose at four o'clock, and to this he greatly attributed his continual good health.

CHAPTER VIII.

PERSECUTIONS.

I HAVE hitherto told you only of the crowds who flocked to hear Wesley preach, and who heard him with joy; but this was not always the case. While there were many who were glad indeed to be told how God has loved us from everlasting,—how He loves us *now*,—and who were ready, with contrition and delight, to go to their Saviour for redemption, and to take Him henceforth for their Master, there were very many whose anger and ill-will were aroused by Wesley's preaching. Some were annoyed at anyone who did not quietly preach in a church, and condemned him without hearing him, or, at any rate, without trying to understand him; and these men did all they could to excite others against him. The following anecdote will illustrate this:—

When Mr. Wesley was once preaching at Bath, Beau Nash (a worldly man, and a great leader of the fashion) entered the room, and, without ceremony, rudely asked by what authority he was preaching, affirming that Wesley was acting contrary to the law. "Besides," said he, "your preaching frightens people out of their wits."

"Sir," replied Wesley, "did you ever hear me preach?"

"No," said Beau Nash.

"How, then, can you judge of what you never heard?"

"By common report," replied Nash.

Here Mr. Wesley rebuked him, saying that he himself would not dare judge any one in that way. Silenced thus far, Nash rudely inquired what the people came there for. Before Mr. Wesley could answer, a voice from the congregation cleverly replied: "Let an old woman answer him. You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body; we take care of our souls; and for the food of our souls we come here."

Nash, finding himself a very differently-treated person in the meeting-house from what he was in the pump-room or the assembly, thought it best to withdraw.

Others hated Wesley because he boldly reproved them for their sins. On these occasions they would do all they could to excite the mob against him, and it was only by the good providence of God that he escaped from their clutches.

Take the following instance, recorded in his *Journal*:—

After preaching at Birmingham, on October 20th, 1743, he rode to Wednesbury, and at twelve preached

in the middle of the town. In the afternoon the mob beset the house, and having got possession of him, they dragged him that night, through a pelting rain, to the house of the justice, who was woke out of his sleep to hear the accusation against Wesley and his followers: "They sing psalms all day; nay, and make folks rise at five in the morning!" The justice wisely advised them to go to their homes, and he himself returned to his bed.

But the mob were not satisfied; they then took him on to Walsall to the justice there; he was also in bed, and would not attend to them.

And now began a terrible scene. The mob came on in crowds, and the noise and hubbub was so great that it was in vain to attempt speaking. The wonder is that they had not torn him in pieces. But amid the danger he preserved his self-possession.

They now dragged him back to the town. As he was being pushed or pulled along, he saw a door open, and tried to go in, but a man caught his hair and dragged him back. Wesley spoke to those nearest him, but could scarcely be heard, for though some wanted him to speak, others tried to silence him, and the confusion became terrible. At length he broke out into prayer. The man who led the mob was moved, and said, "Sir, I will spend my life for you. Follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head." Others followed this man's

example, and came round the preacher. By degrees they got him out of the mob, but only for a time ; it collected again. They managed, however, to get into some meadows, and so round, and back safe to Wednesbury by ten the next morning.

So God, in answer to prayer, delivered His servant out of the clutches of these wild savage men, as long before He had kept another faithful servant safe from the mouths of the lions.

This was one out of many instances of persecution to which Mr. Wesley was subjected, but which never in the slightest degree caused him to shrink from the work which he was doing for his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

On Thursday, July 4th, in a following year, Mr. Wesley rode into Falmouth, about three o'clock in the afternoon, to see a Christian lady who was in weak health. It got known to some bad characters that he was in the town, and they determined to revenge themselves for the rebukes their sins had had at his hands. Almost as soon as he had sat down in this lady's house, it was beset on all sides by an innumerable multitude of people. "A louder or more confused noise," he says, "could hardly have been heard at the taking of a city by storm." At first Mrs. B. and her daughter endeavoured to quiet them ; but it was labour lost—they might as well have attempted to still the raging of the sea ; and they were, therefore,

soon glad to make their escape by leaving the house by a back way, Mr. Wesley not accompanying them, lest his presence should bring danger to them.

The rabble, meanwhile, roared with all their might, "Bring out the *Canorum*! Where is the *Canorum*?" (An unmeaning word, which the Cornish rabble then used instead of *Methodists*.)

No answer being given, they quickly forced open the outer door, and filled the passage. Only a wainscot partition, which was not likely to stand long, now separated Mr. Wesley from the mob. He immediately took down a large looking-glass which hung against the partition, thinking that the whole side would fall in at once, and having, even in that moment of danger, thought for the property of others.

The rabble began their work with abundance of bitter threats and imprecations; and so terrified a poor servant girl who was left in the house, that she cried out in fear, "Oh, sir, what must we do?"

His answer was, "We must pray."

And he himself records that, at that time, his life did not seem worth an hour's purchase.

The girl asked, "But, sir, is it not better for you to hide yourself? To get into this closet?"

Mr. Wesley calmly replied, "No; it is best for me to stand just where I am."

Among those without were the crews of some privateers, which had lately come into the harbour. Some

of these, being angry at the slowness of the rest, thrust them away, and coming up altogether, set their shoulders to the inner door, crying out, "Avast lads, avast!" Away went all the hinges at once, and with a great crash, door and mob fell into the room.

Mr. Wesley calmly stepped forward into the midst of them, saying, "Here I am! Which of you has anything to say to me? To which of you have I done any wrong? To you? or you? or you?" And doubtless, as he spoke, he looked at them with his piercing eyes, so that theirs, abashed, fell before his. They positively made way for him, and he, still challenging them to convict him of wrong against them, passed out unharmed into the middle of the street.

The poor servant girl, who had thus far safely followed him, was now separated by the crowd, but she seems to have met with no harm.

As soon as Mr. Wesley found himself in the street, he called out, as loudly as he could, "Neighbours, countrymen! do you desire to hear me speak?"

Some of the mob cried vehemently, "Yes, yes! He shall speak! he shall! Nobody shall hinder him!"

But as Mr. Wesley had nothing to stand upon,—you remember he was short of stature,—and could not get to any rising ground, he could only be heard by those who were near him. However, he would not be discouraged, and spoke without stopping. As far

as the sounds reached the people were still, gradually some hard hearts softened, and two or three of their captains turned about and swore, "Not a man shall touch him."

The noise and the crowd had by this time excited the attention of the more respectable townspeople, and Mr. Thomas, a clergyman, came up, and with great kindness and courage asked: "Are you not ashamed to use a stranger thus?" He was soon seconded by two or three gentlemen of the town and one of the aldermen: they got near to Mr. Wesley, and walked with him down the street, he still keeping the mob quiet by speaking to them. Presently they reached Mrs. Maddern's house, which, at the desire of the gentlemen, Mr. Wesley entered in order to rest himself. At first they thought of sending for his horse to the door; but on second thoughts they judged it unwise that he should venture out among the people again: so the horse was sent on before him to Penryn, and Wesley went thither by water, which was easy to arrange, for the sea ran close to the back door of Mrs. Maddern's house.

Writing about this persecution and his providential deliverance, Mr. Wesley says:—

"I never saw before—no, not at Walsall itself—the hand of God so plainly shown as here. *There* I had some companions who were willing to die with me; *here*, not a friend but one simple girl, who likewise

was hurried away from me in an instant, as soon as ever she came out of Mrs. B.'s house. *There* I received some blows, lost part of my clothes, and was covered over with dirt; *here*, although the hands of perhaps some hundreds of people were lifted up to strike or throw, they were one and all stopped in the midway, so that not a man touched me with one of his fingers. Neither was anything thrown from first to last; so that I had not even a speck of dirt on my clothes. Who can deny that God heareth the prayer? or that He hath all power in heaven and earth?"

It is evident that there came to John Wesley, in the midst of danger, a calm and fearless manner, which betrayed the heroism of a soul whose courage is derived from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Numberless instances might be given of this bravery, but the above are sufficient to show you how truly a hero he was.

The following verses were written by him in reference to these persecutions. You may not yet be able to understand all that he means in them, but there is much that you will understand, and they form a fitting ending to this chapter:—

“ Ye simple souls, that stray
Far from the paths of peace
(That unfrequented way
To life and happiness),

How long will ye your folly love,
And throng the downward road,
And hate the wisdom from above,
And mock the sons of God?

“Madness and misery
Ye count our life beneath;
And nothing great can see,
Or glorious in our death:
As born to suffer and to grieve,
Beneath your feet we lie,
And utterly contemned we live,
And unlamented die.

“Poor pensive sojourners,
O'erwhelmed with griefs and woes;
Perplexed with needless fears,
And pleasure's mortal foes;
More irksome than a gaping tomb,
Our sight ye cannot bear,
Wrapt in the melancholy gloom
Of fanciful despair.

“So wretched and obscure,
The men whom ye despise;
So foolish, weak, and poor,
Above your scorn we rise;
Our conscience in the Holy Ghost
Can witness better things;
For He whose blood is all our boast
Hath made us priests and kings.

“Riches unsearchable
In Jesus' love we know;
And pleasures from the well
Of life our souls o'erflow.

From Him the Spirit we receive
Of wisdom, love, and power ;
And always sorrowful we live,
Rejoicing evermore.

“ Angels our servants are,
And keep in all our ways,
And in their hands they bear
The sacred sons of grace :
Our guardians to that heavenly bliss,
They all our steps attend ;
And God Himself our Father is,
And Jesus is our Friend.

“ With Him we walk in white,
We in His image shine ;
Our robes are robes of light,
Our righteousness divine ;
On all the grovelling kings of earth
With pity we look down,
And claim, in virtue of our birth,
A never-fading crown.”

CHAPTER IX.

WESLEY'S FRIENDS.

IN the year 1747 Wesley visited Ireland, and arrived in Dublin on the 9th of August. He was permitted to preach soon after landing, but the usual persecutions quickly commenced. Mr. Charles Wesley now joined his brother, and the two, in spite of mobs and numerous inconveniences, preached zealously and with much success. In some places the rage and opposition of the Papists were so great that they barely escaped with their lives.

On the journeys to Ireland, to and fro, Mr. Charles Wesley stayed at the house of a family named Gwynne, who resided at Garth, in Wales. One of the family, Sarah, greatly attracted his attention, and on April 9th, 1749, Miss Sarah Gwynne became his wife. She seems to have been a most excellent lady, and the marriage proved a very happy one.

Before John Wesley's departure for England, he stayed some days at Dublin. On one of these days, while preaching on the Green near the barracks, a man cried out, "Aye, he is a Jesuit: that's plain." To which a Popish priest, who happened to be near,

replied, "No, he is not; I would to God he was!" So even the voice of an enemy was compelled to bear testimony to his zeal and talents.

Soon after he sailed, the mob, who had always greatly annoyed those who attended his meeting-house, made an attack on the building. They pulled down the pulpit, and carried it and the benches into the street; here they made a great bonfire of them, shouting round it for several hours. Yet, in spite of mobs and persecutions, the cause of God grew and prospered.

When Wesley had left Ireland, and was hard at work again in his own country, he took the greatest interest in his friends and in the work of those who were appointed preachers. In fact, he laboured with his pen no less than with his voice, and his letters of kindly advice did great good.

It was long ago said in Ireland, "When you plead for your life, plead in Irish," meaning that an Irishman's heart would be reached by a plea made in his native tongue. Wesley, who never did anything by halves, and certainly never spared himself, was aware of the advantage which would be gained by preaching to the Irish in that language, and wished his convert from popery, Thomas Walsh, to preach in Irish. Walsh did so, and with great effect. Even the poor Catholics listened willingly when they were addressed in their mother-tongue. His hearers frequently shed tears of

contrition or joy. In country towns, the peasantry, who had stopped to hear the preacher from mere wonder or curiosity, were so melted by his doctrines, that they declared they could follow him all over the world.

But wherever the work of God prospers, either in a nation or in an individual soul, there is Satan striving hard to destroy it. As Mr. Wesley continually suffered from persecutions, so did his immediate followers and friends—Thomas Walsh among them.

At a county town about twenty miles from Cork, the magistrate, who was rector of the place, declared he would commit Walsh to prison, if he did not promise to preach no more in the neighbourhood. He replied by asking if there were no swearers, drunkards, Sabbath-breakers, and the like, in those parts; adding, that if, after he should have preached there a few times, there appeared no reformation among them, he would never come there again. Not satisfied with such a proposal, the magistrate committed him to prison. But Walsh was popular in the town. The people manifested a great interest in his behalf: he preached to them from the prison window, and it was soon thought advisable to release him.

While speaking of the work of God in Ireland, I must not omit to refer to the great power and influence Charles Wesley's hymns had over the minds of these people. Once this power was displayed in a most singular manner.

At Wexford a great many converts had been made, but, as the persecutions just then were great, they were in the habit of meeting secretly in a barn, with doors closed and well bolted. A man, who hated them for their religion, and who was hoping to gain some reward by betraying them, was for some time puzzled how to accomplish it. At length he hit upon the expedient of hiding himself in a sack in the barn, as near the door as possible ; he would hear enough to be able to swear information against them that they were holding a "conventicle," and while they were occupied in devotion, he would slip out of the sack, open the door to people outside, who would enter and take the Methodists up without damaging the property. This was his plan, and one day he put it into execution. He found out when a meeting was to be held, and hid himself all ready in a large sack in a corner. Soon the poor persecuted Methodists assembled, and the door was locked.

Their service began with one of Charles Wesley's hymns ; and the singing laid hold on his heart, so much so that he determined to hear the verses through before breaking up the meeting. After the singing, there was a prayer ; that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, did more than move his feelings, it laid hold on his conscience, and he lay trembling and moaning in the sack, to the great alarm of the congregation, who, still influenced by their old Popish superstitions, thought it was the devil. By-and-by the words of the preacher

smote him still more, and his trembling and moaning was greater ; then some one, boldly opening the sack, found the weeping penitent, and got him out. He remained to the close of the service ; and he, who had come to injure, was, like the Apostle of old, convicted of sin, and became a sincere follower of Jesus Christ.

I have hitherto not mentioned that Charles Wesley, like his elder brother, frequently preached in the open air, and God's blessing followed his labours. A person who had heard him preach in the fields near Bristol, thus describes his manner :—

“ I found him standing on a table board, in an erect posture, with his hands and eyes lifted up to heaven in prayer ; he prayed with uncommon fervour, fluency, and variety of proper expressions. He then preached about an hour, in such a manner as I scarce ever heard any man preach ; though I have heard many a finer sermon, according to the common taste of acceptance of sermons, I never heard any man discover such evident signs of a vehement desire, or labour so earnestly to convince his hearers, that they were all by nature in a sinful, lost, undone state. With uncommon fervour he acquitted himself as an ambassador of Christ, beseeching them in His name to be reconciled to God.”

It is said that of one of Charles Wesley's sermons, “Awake, thou that sleepest,” more than a hundred thousand copies have been sold.

From what you have read, you will see how little

sympathy John and Charles Wesley had in their great work from their fellow clergymen. A few, however, rose above prejudice, and entered warmly into the views of the brothers. A Life of John Wesley would be scarcely complete without a reference to Jean Guillaume de la Flechere, or, as he was generally called, Fletcher of Madely, who was one of Wesley's heartiest co-workers. Directly he was ordained he connected himself with the Methodists. Madely was then inhabited by colliers and miners, and their characters were, unhappily, as bad as was too frequently the rule in mining districts.

Fletcher zealously set about their reformation ; and devoted not only his life but his whole fortune in doing good. When some who lived far off excused themselves for not attending the morning service, pleading that they did not awake early enough to get their families ready, he, for some months, set out every Sunday morning at five o'clock, with a bell in his hand, and went round the most distant parts of the parish to call up the people.

At first the rabble of the place resented the manner in which he ventured to reprove and exhort them ; but he soon won upon them, rude and brutal as they were, till at length his church, which at first had been so scantily attended, that he was discouraged by the smallness of the congregation, began to fill to overflowing.

His death was very interesting and affecting. Though

his health was declining, he would not give up work ; nor be persuaded to get any assistance on the Sunday before his death. He, with great difficulty and faintness, went through the service, amid the sobs of his sorrowing people, who foresaw that they would soon see him no more. After the sermon he, with difficulty, got to the communion table, and distributed, with his trembling hands, the memorials of the love of the dying Lord. In the course of this concluding office, he gave out several verses of hymns, and delivered many affectionate exhortations to his people, calling upon them to celebrate the mercy of God in songs of adoration and praise. And now, having struggled through this service, he was supported home, from whence he never came forth again alive. He died peacefully on the following Sunday.

Do you remember those words of the “ serious man ” to John Wesley, spoken years before ?—“ You wish to serve God and go to heaven ; remember, *you cannot serve Him alone ;* you must, therefore, *find* companions, or *make* them. *The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.*” Well had Wesley profited by those words ; and the world is better, not only for the work which he did, but for the work of ‘other good men, who were influenced and excited by his noble example. Dear boys and girls, you cannot serve God alone. Give your heart to Christ, be His,—and all around you, at home, in school, and in the play-ground, will be better and happier because you are a Christian child.

CHAPTER X.

WESLEY'S MARRIAGE AND LABOURS.

WE have *heard* much of earthquakes in these days, and have read with sorrowful hearts accounts of the terrible devastations, the awful loss of human life resulting from them; but, we may well be thankful to say it, our land is all but free from these awful upheavings of nature. However, in the year 1750, London was visited by an earthquake which caused great alarm. Though slight indeed compared to the shocks experienced in tropical countries, it was awfully startling. Stacks of chimneys were thrown down, houses shook, and great consternation prevailed.

The first shock was on February 8, 1750; and on the 8th of March Wesley wrote thus to his brother:—

“ This morning, a quarter after five, we had another shock of an earthquake. . . . I was just repeating my text, when it shook the Foundry so violently, that we all expected it to fall on our heads. A great cry followed from the women and children. I immediately cried out, ‘ *Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved, and the hills be carried into the*

midst of the sea : for the Lord of Hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is our refuge !' He filled my heart with faith and my mouth with words, shaking their souls as well as their bodies. The earth moved westward, then east, then westward again, through all London and Westminster. It was a strong and jarring motion, attended with a rumbling noise like that of thunder."

April 4th he writes :—

" Fear filled our chapel, occasioned by a prophecy of the return of the earthquake this night."

The Westminster end of the town was full of coaches conveying people away. Rich and poor, learned and unlearned, were crazy with the panic. Those who could not get away watched in the fields all night, or came to the door of the Foundry (much as they had hitherto despised Methodists), and begged for admittance, thinking there was greater safety under a roof where such meetings were held ! A lady, just stepping into her coach to escape, dropped down dead from fear. How convincing are these incidents that there is no perfect peace save for those who have learned to trust in God at all times. " London," says Wesley, " looks like a sacked city !" Mr. Whitfield preached to crowds at midnight in Hyde Park.

I fear that, with very many, this desire to hear about religion resulted in no lasting good, and that as their fear became calmed, the old worldly God-neglect-

ing life resumed its power ; but in some cases lasting benefit may have been received.

In this same year (1750) Mr. Wesley married Mrs. Vizelle, a widow. He had formerly written on the advantages of a single life, but, like very many others have done, he saw fit to alter his views as years went by. Before this event he had become much attached to a very superior lady, and believed his affection returned ; but by some misunderstanding he did not make her an offer in time, and she became the wife of a minister, Mr. Murray. For this lady he ever entertained a sincere friendship.

Wesley's marriage turned out an unhappy one. Mrs. Vizelle (who before the knot was tied had feigned the deepest sympathy in his work, and promised not to hinder it in the slightest degree) proved, after marriage, quite unworthy of the man whose name she bore. She became jealous of his duties, exacting, robbed him of his property, and committed many other unworthy and foolish acts. Wesley seems to have borne with her for some time with great forbearance : when she ran away from him, which she did several times, he invited her to return ; at length he grew weary of her selfishness and folly, and the last time she left him he determined not to ask her to come back. "I did not forsake her, I did not dismiss her, I will not recall her," he writes in his journal. This occurred after they had been married about twenty

years. She lived ten years longer, but I believe they did not meet again.

In the year 1753 Wesley had a serious attack of illness ; he was seized with an ague, and was in some danger. Being ordered country air, rest, and daily riding, he went to a friend's house at Lewisham. Here thinking he might die, and wishing a simple epitaph to be placed over him, he wrote one ready :—

“ Here lieth
The body of JOHN WESLEY,
A brand plucked out of the burning :
Who died of a consumption in the fifty-first year
of his age ;
Not leaving, after his debts are paid, ten pounds
behind him ;
Praying,
God be merciful to me, an unprofitable servant !”

By the advice of friends he went to hot wells near Bristol, where he renewed his strength, and immediately resumed his work with greater energy than ever.

In the April of the year 1751 he visited Scotland. Thousands flocked to hear him. Many wished to engage him in religious disputes and controversies, but Wesley avoided this. His work on earth was not to dispute, but to preach the Gospel, and to insist on the grand points of salvation by faith alone. He cared not to lose time in settling minor points of belief, which time he felt would be better employed in beseeching

sinner to be reconciled to God, in telling the outcast and the wretched that One cared for them, that One had died for them—that *now*, even while they listened, their sins might be forgiven, and they become the subjects of a new birth unto righteousness.

Two years after he visited Scotland again, this time entering it through Dumfries. In passing the sands which lie between Bonas and that town, the innkeeper who guided him asked, with much simplicity, “How much a year he got by preaching thus?” This gave Mr. Wesley an opportunity of explaining to his guide the kind of gain, to which he seemed an utter stranger. This new view of the matter so astonished the simple man, and gave him so much to reflect on, that he spoke not one word, good or bad, till he took his leave when they reached their destination.

Wesley generally won the love of those with whom he came in contact in the course of his ministerial journeys, and they delighted to recount any anecdote regarding him.

An instance of John Wesley's calmness in danger, even when he was no longer young, is thus related by Peter Martin, an ostler :—

“ I first heard Mr. Wesley preach in the street, near our market-house, seventy-four years ago. I had an adventure with him when I was ostler at the London Inn. Mr. Wesley came there one day in a carriage,

driven by his own servant, who being unacquainted with the road further westward than *h*——, he obtained my master's leave for me to drive him to St. Ives. We set out, and on our arrival at Hayle we found the sands between that and St. Ives, over which we had to pass, overflowed by the rising tide. On reaching the water's edge, I hesitated to proceed, and advised him of the danger of crossing; and a captain of a vessel seeing us stopping, came up and endeavoured to persuade us from an undertaking so full of peril, but without success. Mr. Wesley had resolved to go on; he said he had to preach at St. Ives at a certain hour, and that he must fulfil his appointment. Looking out of the carriage window, he called loudly to me, 'Take the sea! take the sea!'

"In a moment I dashed into the waves, and was quickly involved in a world of waters. The horses were now swimming, and the carriage became overwhelmed with the tide, as the hind wheels were not unfrequently merged in the deep pits and hollows in the sands. I struggled hard to maintain my seat in the saddle, while the poor affrighted animals were snorting and rearing in the most terrific manner. I expected every moment to be swept into eternity, and the only hope I then cherished was on account of driving so holy a man.

"At that awful crisis I heard Mr. Wesley's voice. With difficulty I turned my head toward the carriage,

and saw his long white locks dripping with water, which ran down the rugged furrows of his venerable countenance. He was looking calmly forth from the windows, undisturbed by the tumultuous war of the surrounding waters, or by the dangers of his perilous situation.

“He hailed me in a tolerably loud voice, and asked, ‘What is thy name, driver?’ I answered, ‘Peter, sir,’ He said, ‘Peter, fear not; thou shalt not sink.’ With vigorous spurring and whipping I again urged on the flagging horses, and at last got safely over; but it was a miracle.

“We continued our way, and reached St. Ives without further hindrance. We were very wet, of course. Mr. Wesley’s first care after our arrival was to see me comfortably lodged in a public-house: he procured me warm clothing, a good fire, and excellent refreshment. Neither were the horses forgotten. Totally unmindful of himself, he proceeded, wet as he was, to the chapel, and preached according to his appointment.”

One cannot fail to be struck, in this adventure, not only by the courage Wesley displayed, but by the forgetfulness of self—even, the *horses* were remembered while his own comforts were disregarded,—and by the determination with which he kept to his engagements.

Very often it happened that those who came to hear him preach with an intention to annoy, were so con-

vinced of sin, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that they became penitent, sincere believers, and frequently great instruments in the hands of God for good.

John Nelson was one of these cases. He seems to have been a terrible reprobate, dreaded by all around him; he heard John Wesley, and felt that "every word was aimed right at him." He became convinced of sin, and gladly embraced the offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. Having thus found forgiveness and peace, he proved the sincerity of his religion by wishing all others to share his happiness. He travelled about into the roughest places, among half-savage miners, among wreckers, in the prisons, everywhere God owning his work by the conversion of souls.

Wesley was once invited to preach at Cole-Orton-Moor. A squire, who detested field-preachers, and whose influence in the neighbourhood was great, determined to stop it. He therefore invited the colliers to a feast, giving them plenty of liquor; and while thus excited, the men armed themselves with formidable truncheons, and went in a body to the place where the open-air service was to be held. They chose for their leader one John Massey, a man of great height and of tremendous strength. He is said to have been the terror of the neighbourhood on account of his quarrelsome disposition and exceeding muscular power. Another man of a similar kind

was second in command. Their plan was, when on the ground, to divide into two, and station themselves half on one side, half on the other side of Mr. Wesley, a leader on each side.

As usual, Mr. Wesley was punctual to his time, and the service commenced. Massey glared savagely at the preacher, but thought he would just hear a little first. As he listened, it seemed to him that all the preacher's words were meant for him and him alone. The Spirit of God sent the words home, and soon tears of repentance were flowing down his face.

Meanwhile the half-drunken colliers were getting impatient, and one man cried out, "John Massey, why dunna ye gi' the word o' command?"

The answer was in the same dialect, and decided enough:—

"If ony mon touches the preacher, I'll reckon wi' him to-morrow mornin' up o' the pit-bonk."

This settled the matter, and the service proceeded and closed in peace. Massey was truly converted; he became a *new man* in Christ Jesus; forsook his evil ways, and was as energetic in the Master's service as he had formerly been in that of the devil. He was for many years a local preacher, and died in humble trust in the love and mercy of his Lord.

These anecdotes will give you but a faint idea of the good wrought by John Wesley, under God's blessing. He sowed wherever he went the "good seed,"

and in this day we see the harvest in a community which numbers thousands of the adopted children of God. And when our hearts thrill as we read sometimes of those patient heroic deaths in our mines, when men meet the King of Terrors under such awful circumstances with the noble calm of Christians, let us remember that these are some of the fruits of those open air sermons preached by John Wesley years ago.

CHAPTER XI.

A "SWEET SINGER OF ISRAEL."

IN the year 1783, in June, Mr. Wesley went to Holland to confer with religious friends, and in that country he spent his birthday. In his *Journal* he made the following observations :—

“ I have this day lived fourscore years, and, by the mercy of my God, my eyes are not waxed dim ; and what little strength of body or mind I had thirty years since, just the same I have now. God grant I may never live to be useless. Rather may I

“ ‘ My body with my charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live.’ ”

On the next day he preached most impressively in the English church at Utrecht.

In 1787 he visited Ireland, and afterwards the Channel Islands of Guernsey and Jersey. Here, though some opposed, he was received with the greatest affection ; the people flocked to hear him, begging him to take up his residence altogether among them.

It is wonderful how, during these years of popularity, both Wesleys preserved their simplicity of character ; but the grace of God in their hearts enabled them not to be “ puffed up ” by applause.

How little the love and admiration he received affected John Wesley may be judged by the following event, which occurred some time previous to this date.

Mr. Culy, the artist, had long desired to take a bust of him, but Mr. Wesley had always refused, saying, he thought it nothing but vanity. One day he called on Mr. Culy relative to some church business, and the latter again begged to be allowed to take his likeness. Wesley, as usual, refused.

"Well," said Mr. Culy, "knowing you value money for the means of doing good, if you will grant my request I will engage to give you ten guineas for the first ten minutes that you sit, and for every minute exceeding that time you shall receive a guinea."

"What," cried Mr. Wesley, "do I understand you aright! that you will give me ten guineas for having my picture taken? Well, I agree to it."

He then took off his coat, and laid down on the sofa, and in eight minutes Mr. Culy had taken a perfect clay model of his features. Mr. Wesley then washed his face, and the artist gave him the ten guineas.

"Well, I never till now earned money so speedily," said Wesley to his companion; "but what shall we do with it?"

Wesley and his friend then went over Westminster Bridge. There they saw a poor woman, with three children, crying bitterly. Her tale was sad enough. Her husband had just been dragged to prison for a

debt of eighteen shillings. A guinea made her happy again, and set her husband free. They then went to the debtor's prison in Giltspur Street; here they saw a miserable man, who had been in prison for months for a debt of ten shillings. Wesley released him.

"Gentlemen, as you came here in search of poverty," said the poor man, "pray go upstairs, if it be not too late."

They did so, and saw a sad spectacle. A man, almost a skeleton, sat in one corner; in the other, a dying woman was lying on some straw with a dead child by her side. Mr. Wesley sent for a doctor, but the woman died from the effects of starvation. The remaining portion of his money Mr. Wesley spent on the poor man, who did not recover for some weeks. His case was distressing. He had become bankrupt, but all his creditors were kindly disposed, save one, by whom he had been shut up in prison. Mr. Wesley collected enough for his release. God now prospered the poor young man; and, in the end, he not only paid his past debts, but endowed a fund for the relief of small debtors. And the first person who was thankful to be helped by this fund was the hard-hearted creditor!

In March 1788, Charles Wesley died. His last moments were perfect peace. When asked if he wanted anything, his frequent answer was, "Nothing but Christ." Some one observed that "the valley of

the shadow of death was hard to be passed," he replied gently, "Not with Christ." On the day previous to his death, his wife asked him, "Have you anything to say to us?" He said, "Only thanks! Love! Blessing!" His last words were, "Lord—my heart—my God;" and then he calmly died. He was seventy-nine years of age.

On one of these last days, after Charles Wesley had been lying silent and quiet for some time, he asked his wife to write down the following lines as he dictated them:—

"In age and feebleness extreme,
Who shall a helpless worm redeem?
Jesus, my only hope Thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;
Oh, could I catch a smile from thee,
And drop into eternity!"

It was his last, his dying song.

I need not dwell at any length on Charles Wesley's character; you who know his beautiful hymns can see how full his heart was of love to the Saviour and to men. He and his brother John were ever loving co-workers and friends. The slight differences in their character did not interrupt their affection. While John seemed born to rule, to be a pioneer in the cause of truth, Charles was inclined more to a domestic life. He was extremely cheerful, and wrote with the greatest ease, sometimes pencilling down his verses while on

horseback, on scraps of card which he kept for that purpose.

Charles left two sons, both of whom inherited their father's talent, though in them it took the form of music instead of poetry.

Charles, the eldest child (born in 1757), "could play," we are told, "a tune on the harpsichord readily, and in good time, when he was only two years and three-quarters old;" when he played, his mother was obliged to tie the tiny musician in his chair, to keep him from falling. He became a fine performer on the organ, and was much noticed by George III., to whom he often played Handel's music. He died, unmarried, in 1815.

Samuel Wesley, another son, was born in 1766. He was three years old before he tried to play a tune, and he then began with "God save the King," picked up from hearing the street organs. At eight years old he composed music. An accident which he met with in his twenty-first year clouded his worldly prospects. Passing along Snow-hill, one evening, he fell into a deep excavation, and the severe injuries he received affected the spine and brain, and produced a morbid state of mind, which lasted many years. He was released from suffering, Oct. 11th, 1837.

CHAPTER XII.

LAST YEARS.

AMONG numberless other good works with which Wesley's life was filled was the founding a school at Kingswood for the children of the ministers and members of the churches. So you see, with all that he had to do, he thought of the little ones, and cared for them. He was peculiarly gentle to children, and they returned his love. Once at Raithby, as he came down the pulpit stairs, he saw a little child sitting on the steps directly in his way. He gently took the little one in his arms, kissed it, and placed it down again on the same spot. He used to keep a number of bright new coins by him, on purpose to please the children he met with in the houses where he stayed when out preaching. One little girl kept a bright sixpence she had received from him till her death; better still, she retained in her memory and heart the truths he taught her while she used to sit upon his knee.

It was in no slight measure owing to John Wesley that Sunday-schools were established. A young woman,

named Sophia Cooke, was a member of his church, and was very desirous of doing good to young people. One day a friend of hers, Mr. Raikes, said to her, as he saw a number of ragged children in the streets, "What shall we do for these poor neglected children?" She answered, "Let us teach them to read, and take them to church." This suggested to Mr. Raikes the plan of Sabbath-school instruction. He and Miss Cooke led the first company of Sunday scholars to church, amid the laughter of the passers-by, who little thought this was the first step in a mighty movement, which would benefit generations yet to come.

Mr. Wesley's love for children lasted to the close of his life. He attached great importance to their early training and conversion. Not long before he died a travelling preacher asked him, "What advice have you to give in order to perpetuate the great revival of religion in which you have been the principal instrument?" Wesley's answer was: "Take care of the rising generation."

It need not be said that Wesley's whole soul revolted against slavery. He and Charles had seen its real aspect in America, and both did all they could to denounce it. The last letter which he wrote (five days before his death) was concerning the abolition of the slave-trade; and the letter is so characteristic of the noble and energetic old man that I will give it you in full:—

“ London, February 26, 1791.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ Unless the Divine Power has raised you up to be as *Athanasius contra mundum*,* I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise, in opposing that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But ‘*if God be for you, who can be against you?*’ Are all of them together stronger than God? O ‘*be not weary in well doing.*’ Go on, in the name of God, and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

“ Reading this morning a tract, wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance, that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress, it being a *law* in all our colonies, that the *oath* of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this!

“ That He who has guided you from your youth up, may continue to strengthen you in this and all things, is the prayer of,

“ Dear Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ JOHN WESLEY.”

* “ Athanasius against the world.”

In 1788, as I have told you, Charles died. It is said that he believed his brother John would join him in a better world within a year; and, considering Wesley's advanced age, it was an event not at all unlikely. But God had more work for his servant to do, though now old age was beginning to make itself felt.

On June 28, 1788 (his birthday), Wesley writes: "It is true I am not so *agile* as I was in times past; my *sight* is a little decayed: my left eye is growing dim, and hardly serves me to read. . . ." But his hearing, smell, and taste were still perfect; and he attributes, under God's blessing, his marvellous health to "constant exercise in the open air," regular sleep, and *early rising*; also to his freedom from *care*. Not that Wesley had not more causes for worry and anxiety than most men, but he had learned to cast all care upon God, and to trust Him with the loving confidence of a little child towards its father.

In the year following (1789) Wesley visited Ireland, having entered his eighty-seventh year. He says of himself at this time: "I now find I grow old." But no persuasions of friends could induce him to retire from work—he wished "to die in harness."

On the first day of the following year (1790) he remarks: "I am now an old man. . . . However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labour. I can preach and write still." He still rose at four o'clock,

and went through the duties of each day with vigour, and without complaint. He wished, he said, "to do a little for God before he dropped into the dust." One of his continual prayers was : "Lord, let me not live to be useless !" and the verse most quoted by him was :

"Oh, that without a ling'ring groan,
I may the welcome word receive;
My body with my charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live!"

On Thursday, the 17th of February, 1791, he preached at Lambeth ; after the service he felt that he had taken cold : however, on the following Friday he read and wrote as usual, and preached at Chelsea in the evening.

The next day (Saturday) he was worse, and on the Sunday following he was unable to preach. On the Tuesday he was little better, went on with his usual work, and preached at the chapel in the City Road. On Wednesday (February 23rd) he went to Leatherhead, where he preached to a small company on "Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found ; call ye upon Him, while He is near." And this sermon closed the ministerial labours of this hard-working servant of the Lord.

On Friday he returned home ill, and was glad to remain in bed all day ; his pulse was high, and he had much fever. Now followed a few days of exhaustion and occasionally feverish delirium, but even when his

head was thus affected, his talk was ever of the Master's work. In his moments of consciousness, when able to speak, his words were a perpetual reference to his trust in the merits of Jesus for salvation, and in those merits *alone*. Once he said : " There is no need for more than what I said at Bristol. My words then were,

" ' I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me ! ' "

referring to a time some years before when his life had been despaired of.

At another part of the same day, he repeated the words, saying, " How necessary is it for every one to be on the right foundation !

" ' I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me. ' "

We must be justified by faith, and then go on to full sanctification."

On Tuesday, March 1st, after a very restless night, he began singing,—

" All glory to God in the sky,
And peace upon earth be restored !
Oh, Jesus, exalted on high,
Appear our omnipotent Lord !
Who meanly in Bethlehem born,
Didst stoop to redeem a lost race ;
Once more to Thy people return,
And reign in Thy kingdom of grace.

" Oh ! would Thou again be made known,
Again in the Spirit descend ;
And set up in each of Thine own
A kingdom that never shall end !

Thou only art able to bless,
And make the glad nations obey;
And bid the dire enmity cease,
And bow the whole world to Thy sway."

Here his strength failed. After a while, he asked for pen and paper, but he could not write—the active fingers failed at last. One of his friends said, "Let me write for you, sir: tell me what you would say."

"Nothing," replied he, "but that *God is with us.*" In the afternoon he began singing,—

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath," &c.

On Wednesday morning the closing scene drew near. Mr. Bradford, his faithful friend, prayed with him, and the last word John Wesley was heard to say was "Farewell." Thus calmly, without even a groan, this beloved pastor entered into the joy of his Lord, while his friends were still kneeling round his bed; and on the face of him who had gone from toil to eternal rest, it is said there was the trace of a heavenly smile, and a beauty scarcely of earth, which went to the hearts of all who saw him.

The funeral service was read by the Rev. Mr. Richardson, who had been his faithful son in the Gospel for nearly thirty years, amid the tears and bitter weeping of those who witnessed it.

The inscription on his tomb is as follows:—

"To the Memory of the venerable John Wesley, A.M., late Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. This great Light arose, by the singular Providence of God,

to enlighten these nations, and to revive, enforce, and defend the pure Apostolical Doctrines and Practices of the Primitive Church: which he continued to do by his writings and his labours for more than half a century; and, to his inexpressible joy, not only beheld their influence extending, and their efficacy witnessed, in the hearts and lives of many thousands, as well in the Western World as in these Kingdoms; but also, far above all human power or expectation, lived to see provision made, by the singular grace of God, for their continuance and establishment, to the joy of future Generations!

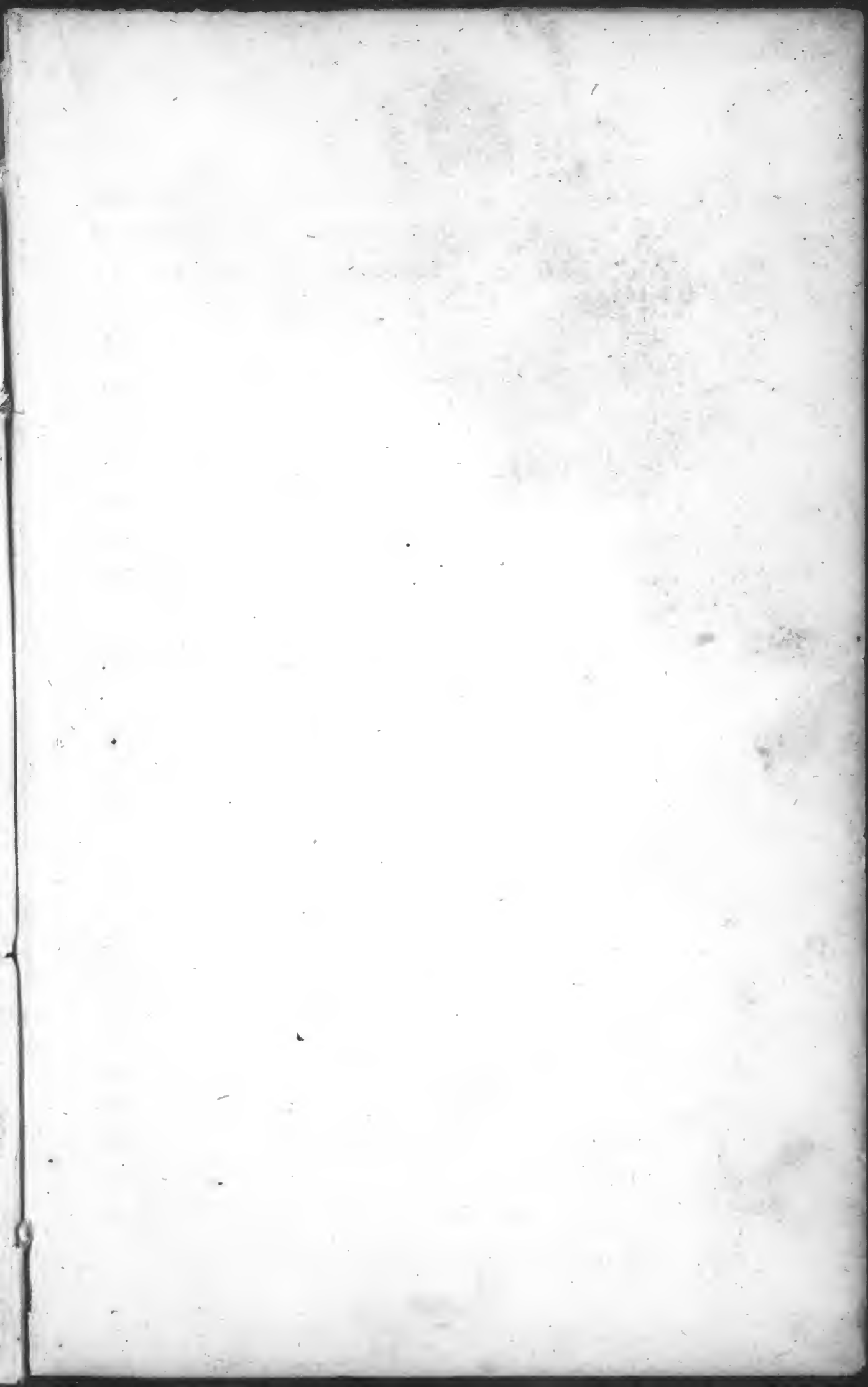
“Reader, if thou art constrained to bless the Instrument, give God the glory!

“After having languished a few days, he, at length, finished his course and his life together; gloriously triumphing over Death, March 2, A.D. 1791, in the eighty-eighth year of his age.”

Never was epitaph more true nor eulogy more deserved.

There remains no more for me to say. His life, my dear young readers, will appeal to you far more forcibly than any words of mine. I can only say, “Follow him, as he followed Christ.” God, in his providence, may never call you to such foremost work as his,—you may not have his talents, his health, or his powerful mind,—but God says to each one of you, “My son, my daughter, give me thine *heart*.”

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